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VIEW

OF THE

ZETLAND ISLANDS.

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A

VIEW

OF THE

ANCIENT AND PRESENT STATE

OF THE

ZETLAND ISLANDS;

INCLUDING THEIR

CIVIL, POLITICAL, AND NATURAL HISTORY;
ANTIQUITIES;

AND

AN ACCOUNT OF THEIR AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES, COMMERCE,
AND THE STATE OF SOCIETY AND MANNERS.

BY

ARTHUR EDMONDSTON, M.D.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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PREFACE.

TO study the character and manners of the inhabitants of different countries, and to trace their progress from rudeness to civilization, are investigations of a highly interesting nature. The desire, however, to engage in them, is not always regulated so much, by a just estimate of the political importance of the country, and the utility of the information, as by a natural, though misplaced curiosity, connected with an idea of the remoteness of its situation. Thus, while the most trivial observation respecting New Holland, and those isles which lie scattered in the Pacific Ocean, is read with interest, and remembered with satisfaction, many valuable and useful communications, which relate to our native country, are soon overlooked and forgotten.

The Zetland Islands, although they have long constituted an integral part of Great Britain,

and their utility to it, especially in a maritime point of view, be obvious and acknowledged; yet their productions, resources, and internal economy, are less generally known than those of the most distant colony of the empire.

There is no country, however apparently insignificant, which has not at some period enjoyed its share of relative importance, and, in the changes to which it has been subjected, does not offer useful matter of contemplation to the statesman and the philosopher. Iceland was long a happy and an independent republic; and even Zetland formed no inconsiderable part of a sovereignty, which lasted for many centuries.

The history of a country circumscribed in extent, and detached in its situation, by exhibiting its varied internal relations in an isolated form, is, perhaps, the best calculated of any, for the attainment of correct notions of human society. Under such circumstances, the whole range of the political system appears, as it were, spread out before us, and its various branches can be studied, either in detail or in conjunction. But on the great scale, they are continually eluding

our perception; and in the magnitude and diversity of pursuit, we are apt to lose sight of the relative influence of the links by which the several parts are united. In the latter case, our views are comprehensive, but general; in the former, they are limited, but precise.

In conformity to this opinion, I have, in the general arrangement of the subjects, placed them in that order in which each appears naturally to arise out of the one which had preceded it. By pursuing this line of analysis, the successive objects of investigation can be traced to their source, and their relation to the whole established by a simple and obvious connection.

In what relates to the more ancient history of Zetland, I have been indebted, almost entirely, to the scanty materials left by the Roman writers, and the Danish historian Torfæus. The mysterious voyage of Nicolo Zeno to the north, in 1380, *contains some curious particulars respecting these Islands; but it was not until after the fourteenth century, that the legislative acts of the Parliaments of Scotland and Great Bri-*

tain, supplied the means of more general and authentic narration.

As to what concerns the present state of Zetland, I have taken my details, exclusively, from personal observation. In every case where I was distracted by contradictory accounts, I endeavoured, as far as possible, to ascertain the truth by an examination of the facts on the spot; and although, in a subject so varied and extensive, some slight inaccuracies may have crept in, the reader may rely on the correctness of my statements.

In the relation of circumstances which affect the state of the tenantry, I have been actuated by no motives of party spirit; and I have scrupulously abstained even from an allusion, to the late controversial writings on the subject. To this I have been led, as much from a disinclination to enter on fruitless discussions of this kind, as from having discovered that these productions contain no information respecting Zetland, which my previous experience had not enabled me to acquire. I have, however, neither suppressed nor disguised any argument which appeared to me to favour,

or to oppose the existing state of things, but have examined every point with that freedom and impartiality which its importance seemed to deserve. If there has been a feeling more predominant in my mind than another, it has been a wish to rouse, by candid inquiry, those who possess influence in this country, to a just sense of their relative situation, and to the study of their true interests, by embracing more enlarged and liberal views of political economy than have yet existed generally among them.

Zetland has been known by the different appellations of Hethland, Hialtland, Zetland, Schetland, and Shetland. The words are of Norwegian origin, and are supposed to be descriptive of its form or appearance. The variations in the orthography have been produced, either by the successive changes to which the language has been subjected, or through the caprice of innovators; but an attempt to appreciate the probable share of each, would, at present, be an unnecessary pursuit. I have adopted the more correct and generally approved orthography, which is, Zetland.

EDINBURGH,
17th November 1809.

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A

VIEW

OF THE

ANCIENT AND PRESENT STATE

OF THE

ZETLAND ISLANDS.

CHAPTER I.

SITUATION, GENERAL APPEARANCE, AND CLIMATE OF THE ZETLAND ISLANDS.

THE islands comprehended under the general appellation of Zetland, exceed one hundred in number. Of these, only thirty-four are inhabited. They lie between the fifty-ninth and sixty-second degrees of north latitude, about forty-seven leagues distant from Buchan-ness, and a little west of the meridian of London.

The general appearance of Zetland is by no means attractive. The coast is rocky and un-

equal, and the hills bleak and mossy. More closely examined, this country presents many interesting scenes, partaking both of the tranquil and the wild. The latter, however, greatly predominate; and while spots of cultivated retirement are comparatively few, the romantic beauties of simple nature are abundantly displayed. Every where may be seen rocks of immense size standing in the sea, and, in some places, at a great distance from the land; some are perforated by magnificent arches, of great magnitude and regularity; in others, there are deep caverns and subterranean recesses; some are cleft in two nearly to the bottom, and others present accuminated tops, exhibiting an endless variety of form and appearance.

Although several places possess this combination of wildness and tranquillity, the most perfect instances of it occur in the island of Unst, and in the parishes of Northmaven and Dunrossness. Balta-sound is a bay two miles long, and about half a mile broad, so completely shut in by the island of Balta, that, seen from a distance, it resembles a lake. Both sides of this bay are in a state of high cultiva-

tion, and sheltering hills rise gradually from the shore. About half a mile from the beach there is a commanding view of the northern ocean, beyond Balta, which it has nearly cut asunder; so that one can at once contemplate the serenity of villages and fields, and the tempestuous motion of a stormy sea. On the west side of the peninsula of Northmaven is a succession of high and precipitous rocks, and back from their edges are verdant plains of several miles in extent. These plains are called the *Villens of Ure.* About two hundred and forty feet directly back from the brink of one of these rocks, are two very large caverns, called the holes of *Scraada.* They are separated from each other above, by a solid mass of rock covered with grass. The sea covers the bottom of the one nearest the edge of the precipice, to a considerable height; but it does not penetrate more than half way into the inner one, which is larger in circumference than the former, and has a beach in it. The distance through which the water flows in this subterranean vault, is above three hundred feet; but I could not ascertain the height of the arch. Some years ago a boat passed under

it, to bring off some wood which the sea had driven on the beach. In a fine summer evening the scene here is truly magnificent: the western ocean swelling on towards the land, the fishing boats almost disappearing on its distant waves, the wild screams of the sea-fowl among the rocks, the verdure of the fields, and these awful gulphs suddenly opening to view, arrest the attention, and excite in the mind the mingled emotions of admiration and horror. Dunrossness presents many beautiful examples of this interesting species of contrast; and in this district there are fields which would not suffer by a comparison with any in Mid-Lothian.

Almost all the large islands are deeply intersected by tortuous bays, or *voes*, as they are called, which afford facilities for internal communication, and excellent harbours for vessels. Several of these are very commodious, well sheltered from every wind, and sufficiently capacious to contain the navy of Britain. There are also a variety of lakes, some of which are interspersed with small islands; but none of them much exceed two miles in length. In

general, they communicate with the sea by small streams, which the rains in winter sometimes augment so much as to render them hardly passable; but although some descend from a considerable height, there are no falls of water exceeding a few feet.

Numerous hills diversify the face of the country, and traverse it in different directions. The highest of them all is Rona's Hill, or *Mons Ronaldi*, in the parish of Northmaven. The accounts of the altitude of this mountain are very contradictory. To some, the barometer has indicated its height to be between fourteen and fifteen hundred feet. In the Statistical Account of Northmaven, it is stated, that "it was found, by geometrical mensuration, to be 3944 feet above the level of the sea." As these statements differ so widely, it is very probable that neither is correct: were I to judge from my experience of the effect produced in similar situations, I should be disposed to believe that it does not exceed two thousand feet, if indeed it be so much. In a clear day, the prospect from this hill is varied and extensive;

and an excellent idea may be formed of the frequent intersections of water which occur.

There are several lofty headlands projecting into the sea, which present a grand and an imposing appearance. Noss-head, on the east side of Bressay, is perfectly mural, and is above six hundred feet high. It is also known by the name of Hang-cliff. Fitful-head, in the southern extremity of the country, is a bold and extensive rock, and can be seen at a great distance off, by vessels approaching Zetland from the south-west. The cliffs of Foula literally lose themselves in the clouds. This island lies about sixteen miles from Mainland, and is at all times a sublime object. It appears of a dark blue colour, and is frequently encircled with a belt of clouds, above which its tops can be distinctly perceived. It is two miles long, and rises gradually towards the west, where its perpendicular rocks are opposed to the whole force of the Atlantic Ocean.

The currents among the different islands are extremely rapid, and run in every direction, but the greatest streams occur at the northern

and southern extremities of the country. Even in the calmest day, the agitation of the sea in the course of the tide, off Scaw and Sumburgh-head, resembles that produced by a storm, and when contrasted with the smooth surface which surrounds it, presents a spectacle truly astonishing.

The arable land bears a very small proportion to the uncultivated parts of the country; and it occurs chiefly on the sea coast, and on the sides of the bays. There are instances of internal cultivation, to a considerable extent, in the parishes of Dunrossness, Tingwall, and the island of Unst, although no where does it extend beyond two miles and a half from the sea. The absence, however, of trees, or shrubbery of any kind, except in a few gardens, to enliven and diversify the prospect, necessarily produces a great degree of uniformity in the scenery, which, on this account, soon ceases to attract the eye, or to engage the attention.

The climate of the Zetland islands is very variable and damp, although by no means generally unwholesome to their inhabitants.

Spring can scarcely be said to commence until April, and there is but little general warmth before the middle of June. The summer terminates for the most part with August, though sometimes it continues through September. Autumn is a very uncertain period, and winter commences with the middle of October, and occupies the remaining months of the year.

Northerly and easterly winds prevail during the months of February and March. Although the weather is then cold, it is more settled and uniform than when the wind is either from the south or from the west. When it comes from these quarters, it is, for the most part, indeed always in the winter time, accompanied by heavy falls of rain. Fogs are very prevalent in the months of May and June. Heavy gales from the west and north-west occur in September, and often destroy the greater part of the crop in a single night. October is sometimes a mild month; but nothing can equal the uncertainty of the weather during the three months that follow. Gales of wind, from the most opposite points, attended by rain and

snow, come on in rapid succession, often in the space of a few hours.

> Una Eurusque, Notusque ruunt creberque procellis
> Africus : et vastos volvunt ad littora fluctus.

Although such be the general routine of the seasons, there now and then occur exceptions to it. The summer and autumn of 1808 was remarkable for the fine weather that prevailed. Farenheit's thermometer was on some days, in the months of July and August, 75° in the shade; and the medium temperature of the air, during these months, from twelve o'clock noon to four in the afternoon, was about 70°. There was scarcely a single bad day from the first of May to the end of October. But such seasons, in the latitude of Zetland, are "like angel visits, few and far between." Rarely, indeed, do two occur in succession.

Snow is seldom observed to lie long on the ground at a time, although I have known both it and keen frost continue two months, without the occurrence of a thaw. Vicissitudes of temperature are very rapid in all seasons, but

the cold is never intense. I have seldom seen it more than 10° below the freezing point of Farenheit's thermometer, and it does not remain long there. The temperature of winter, on the whole, is much milder in Zetland, from its insular situation, than in more southern latitudes, but the heat of summer is less powerful and steady. The medium temperature of the winter months may be taken at 38°, and that of summer at 65°. The atmosphere, except in the middle of summer, is surcharged with humidity, which impresses the frame with a cold and chilly sensation.

Thunder is by no means of such frequent occurrence as it used to be. I do not recollect to have heard a single peal during the whole year of 1808. The aurora borealis, so much admired, and so often seen in arctic regions, has not appeared in the atmosphere of Zetland for the last few years, so frequently, nor with such splendour as formerly. The cause of the disappearance of this phenomenon is no doubt connected with that of thunder and lightning, both depending on certain states of electricity in the air.

A great deal has been said about the want of light in this country in the winter time. A gentleman, who certainly might have known better, says, "In winter the sun sets soon after it rises, and in summer rises soon after it sets, so that in that season the nights are almost as light as the day; as on the contrary, in December the day is nearly as dark as the night."* This is almost a literal translation of the observation made by Pliny. On the 22d of December, which is the shortest day in the year, the sun rises seventeen minutes and a half past nine o'clock, and sets forty-two minutes and a half past two o'clock. He is therefore five hours and twenty-five minutes above the horizon. But, besides this, there is a considerable degree of light both before his rising and after his setting, and when the atmosphere is clear, the influence is protracted for several hours after his complete disappearance. On the 9th of December 1808, I could distinctly read ordinary print, by day light, at five o'clock of the afternoon. The moon did not rise that evening until half past eight, but the day had been very fine.

* Preston, Phil. Trans.

But if the winter be dark and gloomy, it is amply compensated by the continued light of the summer months. The nights begin to be very short early in May, and from the middle of that month to the end of July, darkness is absolutely unknown. The sun scarcely quits the horizon, and his short absence is supplied by a bright twilight. Nothing can surpass the calm serenity of a fine summer night in the Zetland isles. The atmosphere is clear and unclouded, and the eye has an uncontrolled and extensive range:—the hills and the headlands look then more majestic, and they have a solemnity superadded to their grandeur:—the water in the bays appears dark, and as smooth as glass:—no living object interrupts the tranquillity of the scene, but a solitary gull skimming the surface of the sea; and there is nothing to be heard but the distant murmuring of the waves among the rocks.

CHAPTER II.

GENERAL HISTORY OF THE ZETLAND ISLANDS.

THE early history of Zetland, like that of more celebrated countries, is involved in mystery and conjecture. Its classical name *Thule*, is expressive of this obscurity. Situated far to the north, and naturally inhospitable in its climate, and unproductive in the soil, it is probable that accident or necessity, rather than choice, first rendered it the residence of man. But when navigation began to be generally practised, and the ancient heroes of Scandinavia made descents on the coasts of Britain, the harbours of Zetland, by affording shelter and protection to their fleets, soon rose in importance, and became an object of consequence in their estimation.

Section I.

State of the Zetland Islands, previous to their occupation by the Norwegians.

It is impossible to trace, with any great degree of precision, the source from which Zetland was first peopled, or to fix the period when that event took place. A reference to its geographic situation would induce us to believe, that the first inhabitants came from Orkney, and the northern parts of Scotland. To the former it is in some measure connected by Foula and Fair-Isle. Foula is a very high land, and not being more than thirty-five miles distant from Orkney, can be seen from it every clear day. Mankind, too, it may be naturally supposed, would more readily venture to gain a land which they saw, than to sail on the pathless ocean in search of one, of the existence of which they could form but an imperfect conception. It is possible, indeed, that boats might have been blown off from the coast of Norway, by gales of wind, and accidentally

driven to Zetland, and their crews would, in all likelihood, have been compelled to remain there. But we can hardly suppose, that, at the early period now alluded to, their boats were of a size sufficient to withstand the violence of a tempestuous sea, or were managed with such skill as to render the passage safe.

Tacitus, the first and most authentic historian who describes the early inhabitants of Caledonia, conjectures, from the colour of their hair, and the muscular form of their bodies, that they were of German origin: "Habitus corporum varii: at ex eo argumenta: namque rutilæ Caledoniam habitantium comæ, magni artus Germanicam originem adseverant."* The learned Mr Pinkerton supports this opinion, and, from a variety of collateral information, leaves little doubt of its truth. He considers the inhabitants of Scotland, described by Tacitus, to have been the Picti or Picts, who, issuing from Scandinavia, went over to Scotland, and for a long period occupied the greater part of it. He also conceives it to be proved, by

* Tacitus in Agricola, Sect. xi.

concurrent testimony, that the Picts passed from the shores of Norway to the Hebrides and the north of Scotland, three hundred years before the birth of Christ; and it is extremely probable that they went to Scotland by way of the islands of Zetland and Orkney.*

That the Picts occupied Zetland for a series of ages, is beyond all doubt; and it is very probable, that if, in their first voyages to the southward, they touched at these islands, they would leave a colony in them; but they might not on that account have been their first visitors. It is highly probable that Orkney was inhabited long before Zetland, from its greater vicinity to Scotland. I have already mentioned that the distance between Orkney and Foula is not more than thirty-five miles. This latter island can be seen easily from Orkney in ordinary clear weather, and I know that in summer, when the atmosphere is very transparent, Orkney can be distinctly perceived from the headlands of Walls in Zetland, which are sixteen miles farther distant from it than

* An Inquiry into the History of Scotland, vol. i. cap. iii. and iv.

Foula. The islands of Zetland might therefore naturally enough be considered by the early inhabitants of Scotland and Orkney as a distant portion of their own country, and they might be led, either by curiosity or stress of weather, to visit them. The Icelandic antiquarian Torfæus states, that the Orkneys were discovered three hundred and eighty-five years before the Christian era. "Constat ex allatis testimoniis, ab anno ante Christum ccclxxxv. notas, et anno ejusdem æræ cclxviii. cultas fuisse Orcadas, quamvis non liqueat quando primum coli ceperint."* Mr Pinkerton states that the Picts occupied Scotland three hundred years before the birth of Christ. Hence it is probable, that Orkney and Zetland were inhabited before the first Scandinavian irruption, and that both received their first possessors from Scotland. But the subsequent residence of the Picts and the Norwegians in these islands, obliterated every trace of their primary Caledonian ancestry, and the few imperfect vestiges of antiquity which Zetland at present

* Torfæus in Hist. Rerum. Orcad. Fol. ed. lib. i. c. 2.

affords, all bespeak a Scandinavian and Norwegian origin.

It is difficult to determine whether the Romans ever actually visited Zetland, although it is extremely probable that it was the land to which they gave the name of *Thule*. Their poets had early an idea of its existence and probable situation, and Virgil, when panegyrizing the widely extended power of Augustus, says,

—— tibi serviat ultima Thule.*

The first expedition to Britain after the time of Julius Cæsar, was that undertaken by the emperor Claudius, about forty-three years after the birth of Christ. Not only the continent of Britain is said to have been subdued on that occasion, but even the Orkney islands felt the power of the Roman arms. "Quasdam insulas etiam ultra Britanniam in oceano positas Romano imperio addidit, quæ appellantur Orcades."† Hector Boethius, in relating this affair, enlarges

* Georgic. lib. i. l. 30.

† Eutropius, lib. vii.

very much on the pains which Claudius personally took to explore the islands and examine their productions, and adds, that on his return to Rome he carried thither with him, as prisoners, Ganus, king of Orkney, and his whole family.* As Eutropius, however, the only ancient historian of celebrity who mentions this expedition, states merely the result of the campaign, it is very probable that the circumstances attending it have been greatly exaggerated. It does not appear that Claudius had proceeded farther north on this occasion than Orkney, as there is no mention of Thule, and yet had he remained in Orkney so long as is alleged by Boethius, he could hardly have failed to have seen it.

Pomponius Mela, in a small work entitled De Situ Orbis, which appeared much about the time of the expedition of Claudius, gave a general sketch of the countries then known to the Romans. He appears to have been acquainted with the size, situation, and even shape of the southern parts of Britain, but his

* Scotorum Hist. Ed. fol. lib. iii. p. 40.

ideas of the northern appendages of that country are by no means so accurate. He is among the first who denominated the Orkney islands *Orcades*, and he states them to be thirty in number, separated from each other by short distances. Speaking of Thule, he attempts to mark its position, and to describe its climate. The observation, "Belgarum littori opposita," used by Mela,* the learned Cambden conceives to be a corruption of the text "Bergarum littori,"† and Bergæ, or Bergen, a city in Norway, lies opposite to Zetland. If this view be correct, there can be little doubt of the identity in this case of Thule and Zetland, as no other place answers to the description.

Pliny, who wrote seventy-seven years after the birth of Christ, says, in his natural history of the world, that Pytheas and Isidorus had, long before his work appeared, given an accurate account of Britain, then known by the name of Albion. He next describes the situation of Ireland. Proceeding northward, he

* Pomp. Mela, de Situ Orbis, lib. iii.

† Camden's Britannia, vol. ii. p. 1483.

takes notice of the Orkney islands, and says that they are forty in number, separated by small distances from each other. He thinks the Hebrides may amount to thirty. He then enumerates those islands which lie between Ireland and Great Britain, thus unequivocally proving, that the latter had been ascertained, by circumnavigation, to be an island. The last spot in a northerly direction, connected with Britain, which he says these writers have taken notice of, is Thule, where, in the middle of summer, the sun is observed scarcely to quit the horizon, and in winter is hardly seen above it; an observation respecting Zetland, which has been repeated by every succeeding traveller as far down as Preston. "Ultima omnium quæ memorantur Thule, in qua solstitio nullas esse noctes indicavimus, cancri signum sole transeunte, nullosque contra per brumam dies."* In another part of the same work, Pliny mentions, on the authority of Pytheas, the situation of the island Thule, which he says is north from Britain six days sail. "Quod fieri in insula Thule, Pytheas Massiliensis scripsit,

* Plin. Hist. Natur. Ed. fol. p. 61, 62.

sex dierum navigatione in Septentrionem a Britannia, distante," and, making allowance for the imperfect state of navigation at that time, the calculation of the average length of the passage will be found to be tolerably correct.

The whole of this statement is deserving of attention. The details appear to be accurate, and the source from which they were obtained must therefore have been authentic. At the time when Pytheas made his voyage of discovery, the Romans had not visited Britain, nor, as an army, did they ever penetrate beyond the woods of Caledonia, and from them no information could be obtained concerning these distant islands.* The historian is therefore at pains to state the source from which he drew his intelligence, and to pay a compliment to

* As an army the Romans did not penetrate into the north-west parts of Caledonia. Mr Pennant says, " I found no marks of them beyond *Orrea* or *Inchtuthel*, excepting at *Fortingal* in *Bredalbine*, where there is a small camp, possibly no more than a temporary advanced post." Introduction to Arctic Zoology, vol. i. p. 25.

the first discoverer, whose writings had long been public, and were considered by the accurate Pliny to be worthy of implicit credit. Before the time of Pytheas, it had been the practice of the Roman writers to comprehend, under the general name Thule, those northern parts of Europe of which they had but an imperfect conception; but this navigator always speaks of Thule as being an island, and from the circumstance of his mentioning the northern direction in which it is situated, and its distance from Scotland, it is by no means improbable that he had really visited it.

Tacitus, in his life of Agricola, considers all the intelligence concerning the northern parts of Britain, previous to his time, as loose and inaccurate. He even states, that Agricola was the first person who discovered the Orkneys. His words are, "Hanc oram novissimi maris tunc primum Romana classis circumvecta, insulam esse Britanniam adfirmavit, ac simul incognitas ad id tempus insulas quas Orcadas vocant, invenit, domuitque: dispecta est et Thule, quam hactenus nix et hiems abdebat."

He afterwards mentions some of the opinions formerly entertained respecting the climate of Thule, and the alleged stillness of the waves which surround it, and says, in opposition to those poetical speculations, that no where are there more rapid currents, nor a more boisterous sea.* The observation, "dispecta est et Thule," "and Thule was seen," in conjunction with the mention of the Orkneys, is of great importance, not merely in ascertaining the actual position of Zetland, but in determining it to be the real Thule of the ancients. No other land than Foula, Fair Isle, or some part of the mainland of Zetland, can possibly be seen in a northerly direction from Orkney; and it is not merely probable, but almost certain, that Foula was the island which Tacitus informs us was seen on that occasion. This may therefore be considered as the first authentic statement now on record of Thule, or Zetland, having been actually seen, although, in point of detail, Tacitus is by no means so circumstantial as Pliny. He neither describes the state of the Orkney islands, nor alludes to their probable number, and as

* Tacitus in Agricola, sect. x.

to Zetland, it was merely seen. Although the fleet under the orders of Agricola doubled Cape Wraith, it does not appear that it returned to England by the west coast of Scotland, for there is no mention whatever made of the Hebrides, nor indeed of any island on the west side, but the isle of Anglesey, and it is spoken of before the author enters on the campaigns of Agricola. It is scarcely possible that this accurate historian could have confounded together the Hebrides and the Orkney islands. The distance between them is too great to admit of such a supposition. It is also very improbable, if the Roman fleet had really sailed through this tempestuous sea, that no mention would have been made of such an event. Although Agricola, therefore, by doubling the north-west promontory of Scotland, conjectured that Great Britain was an island, it does not appear that he ascertained the fact by circumnavigating its shores by his fleet.

Ptolemy the geographer, in his charts of the British islands, which appeared about the year 140, places Thule in the sixty-third degree north from the equator, in a north-west direc-

tion from Orkney. This is certainly not the parallel which more modern geographers have assigned it; but he has laid the Orcades in the sixty-second degree, and Thule appears to be nearly about the same distance from the Orcades, that the present Zetland is from Orkney. Ptolemy appears to have been indebted for his information respecting Britain, chiefly to the researches of Pliny.

After the time of Tacitus, Britain remained long in a state of profound peace, till at length, when the Roman empire began to be assailed at every point, and the veteran legions were called off for the defence of Italy, the Picts and Scots made incursions on their defenceless neighbours. The Romans aided the Britons for awhile in the struggle, and their poets have celebrated victories, which their generals are said to have achieved as far north as the Orkneys; yet it is extremely probable, that, after the first century, they never penetrated beyond the fortresses constructed by Agricola.

Section II.

Occurrences which took place in the Zetland Islands, from the time of their invasion by the Norwegians until their transference to the Crown of Scotland.

In the vast interval between the time of Agricola and the year 875,* when Harold Harfagre, king of Norway, landed in Zetland, on his way to Orkney and the Hebrides, there are no authentic documents from which any intelligence can be gleaned, concerning the events which occurred in these distant islands. Ignorant of every thing but the mysteries of superstition, their rude inhabitants would be occupied almost solely in "provision for the day that was passing over them;" there would be nothing to interrupt the undeviating uniformity of the scene; and the history of one year would

* Mr Pinkerton differs from Torfæus, as to the year when Harold subdued these islands. He thinks this event could not have taken place before 910, and his reasoning on this subject is very plausible. Inquiry, vol. ii. p. 295.

therefore be the history of a century. Convinced of the truth of this fact, we can express but little regret at the penury of materials on which a relation of their transactions could be formed, and feel no wish to remove the veil by which they are covered.

Previous to the actual invasion of these islands by Harold, it appears that the Norwegians had been in the practice of visiting Zetland in considerable numbers, and had actually settled in it. When Harold ascended the throne, a great part of Norway was divided into small states, the sovereigns of which acknowledged him as their liege lord; but Harold was not satisfied with so partial an influence over them, and, after a series of battles, reduced the whole to subjection, and resolved the government of the country into one absolute monarchy. Many of the inhabitants, indignant at this violent and unjust usurpation of their liberty, left their native country, and took refuge in Zetland, Orkney, and the western isles, and repeatedly harrassed the king, by making predatory incursions on the more defenceless parts of the coast of Norway. In-

censed at these repeated outrages, Harold equipped a fleet, on board of which he embarked an army, and proceeded to the westward, resolved to suppress piracy and to conquer new countries. He landed first in Zetland, and coming unexpectedly on the inhabitants and plunderers, soon compelled them to submit. "Quadam æstate, oceano transmisso, primo ad Hialtlandiam delatus, predones omnes, quotquot improvisam expeditionem minime suspicati elabi nequibant ad internicionem delevit."* There is a bay on the north-east part of the island of Unst, which to this day bears the name of *Harold's-wick*, and is very probably the spot at which he first landed. His stay appears to have been very short in Zetland. He proceeded westward, and successively subdued Orkney, the Hebrides, and part of the north of Scotland. Having been successful in this expedition, even beyond his hopes, Harold thought of returning to Norway, but previously wished to consolidate his power over his new conquests, by establishing in them some form of government. With this view he be-

* Torfæus, lib. i. cap. 3.

stowed the sovereignty of Orkney and Zetland on Rognvald or Ronald, earl of Merca, one of his faithful adherents, with power to rule over them in the manner most agreeable to himself. Besides having repeatedly shared in his dangers, and thus having a claim on the generosity and gratitude of his sovereign, Ronald had, in the late expedition to the westward, lost, in battle, a son whose name was Ivar, and the earldom appears to have been more immediately conferred on him as a solace for this loss. Ronald however declined the honour, but had interest with the king to get both the title and estate transferred to his brother Sigurd, who thus became the first earl of Orkney; and the earldom was then unfettered by any homage to a superior.*

Although Zetland was included in the earldom, yet, being considered a subordinate part of it, was seldom dignified with any particular

* Torfæus, lib. cit. p. 10, 11.

While Harold was subduing the islands of Zetland, Orkney, and the Hebrides, Alfred the Great was occupied in cultivating the arts of peace, promoting literature, and in framing laws for the government of England.

share of attention by the earls. It appears to have been a source from which they recruited their fleets and armies, but, except in one or two instances, none of them honoured it with even a temporary residence, for any considerable time; and indeed, until long after the transference of these islands to the crown of Scotland, the intelligence respecting the state of Zetland is meagre and uncertain. Orkney, on the contrary, from its more general fertility, but still more from its vicinity to the mainland of Scotland, by affording comparative security, and, at the same time, facilities of making incursions into Scotland, held a high rank in the estimation of the Norwegian kings, and was long the scene of tumult and contention among the earls who reigned over it, and whose exploits have been minutely recorded. While the history, therefore, of this country can be presented in a connected view, that of Zetland consists chiefly, in the relation of a few detached occurrences, often separated from each other by a number of years.

The Zetland islands, as well as the other insular conquests of Harold, are said to have

been inhabited, at the time of their invasion, by two distinct nations, known by the appellations of *Peti* and *Papæ*. The former appear to have been the Picts, who had long possessed them, and the Papæ are supposed, by the ingenious Mr Pinkerton, to have been a species of clergy. "The Papas," he observes, "by the usual confusion of long tradition, here called a nation, were clearly the Irish papas or priests, long the sole clergy in the Pictish dominions, and who, speaking a different language from the Picts, were by the Norwegian settlers regarded, not as a distinct profession only, but as remains of a different nation."* Beyond this short account of the inhabitants, there is nothing to be gathered respecting the state of the internal police, or the general government of the islands at the time of the Norwegian invasion. They appear to have been for some time before that event, the rendezvous of piratical adventurers, among whom, it is probable, war and plunder were the only arts either known or practised.

* Inquiry, vol. ii. p. 297.

Sigurd the First, or Elder, having, by the resignation of his brother, become earl of Orkney and Zetland, assumed the government of them about the year 915, but he did not long enjoy this elevated situation. Having made an alliance with Thorfin, son of the king of Dublin, they subdued, with their joint forces, Caithness, Sutherland, and a part of Ross and Murray-shire. After having gained, on one occasion, a complete victory, each of the earl's horsemen was directed to suspend from his saddle, by way of triumph, the head of a fallen enemy, and Sigurd himself carried one among the rest; suddenly clapping spurs to his horse, a large front tooth in the mouth of the knight whose head hung dangling by his side, struck him on the calf of the leg, and wounded him so severely that the part mortified, and he died soon after.* If this account of the cause of earl Sigurd's death be correct, it exhibits a deplorable picture of savage barbarity, and demonstrates that civilization had made but slender progress, even among the nobility of the age in which he lived.

* Torfæus, lib. cit. p. 12.

Sigurd was succeeded by his son Guttorm, who dying without issue, within one year from the time of his accession, the earldom reverted to his uncle Ronald, on whom it had been originally bestowed. Ronald conferred it on his son Hallad, who, after having spent a considerable time in thoughtless indolence in Orkney, returned to Norway; and his father had once more the disposal both of the title and the estate. Ronald summoned his sons before him, and, after appreciating their respective claims, bestowed the earldom on Einar, who, though less noble by his mother's side than the others, was deemed by Ronald the best qualified to do justice to this arduous situation. Einar, on his way to Orkney, landed in Zetland: there the people flocked in numbers to his standard, and accompanied him to Orkney, where he soon reduced matters to order and regularity. This nobleman turned his mind chiefly to the improvement of the islands, and pointed out to the inhabitants a mode of obtaining fuel from turf, of which they appear to have been sadly in want, as all the wood had been exhausted. To perpetuate the memory of so useful a discovery, which says but little for the ingenuity of the isl-

anders, the word *Torf* was prefixed to his name, and he was afterwards called Torf-Einar. "Dictus est Einar de cespite, patria lingua Torf-Einar, quod lignorum inopiam cespite bituminoso, in Torfnesia, Scotiæ promontorio, effosso Orcadenses primus supplere docuerit: silvis enim insulæ carebant."* It is a curious circumstance in the history of this discovery, that Einar should have found it necessary to send the people of Orkney to Caithness for turf, while Orkney itself at that time abounded so much in this substance. It is not likely that the Zetlanders had anticipated the earl in this invention, and if not, their condition must have been truly distressing, until they ascertained, by satisfactory experiment, that neither Orkney, nor Caithness, nor indeed any other country, was more amply provided with moss than their own.

Torfeinar was not suffered to remain long in that state of tranquillity which he wished to enjoy, and which he seemed so well to deserve. The sons of Harold Harfagre, Halfdan and

* Rerum Orcad. Hist. p. 19.

Gudrod, had now attained the age of manhood, and felt indignant that a subject of the crown should possess, in his family, such princely influence. To strike at once at the root, they fell unexpectedly upon Ronald, count of Merca, and inhumanly put him to death, with sixty of his domestics; and, while Gudrod ravaged his Norwegian estates, Halfdan invaded Orkney with a squadron of ships, and, pretending to be the king of Norway, compelled many to join his standard. Harold felt deep regret at the murder of his early friend and companion, and, although far advanced in life, immediately levied troops, and marched against his son Gudrod. This prince, despairing of success, threw himself on the mercy of his father, and obtained his pardon. To remedy this misfortune, and to pay every respect to the memory of the departed nobleman, Harold invested Thorer Tacitus, the third son of count Ronald, with all his father's honours and estates, and gave him his own daughter Alofa in marriage.

In the mean time Torfeinar, aware of the force which Halfdan had brought against him,

retired into Caithness, and having there raised forces, passed over into Orkney, and having accidentally surprised his opponent, murdered him. He then ordered Halfdan's lungs to be cut out and offered up to *Odin;* and he himself delivered an extempore address to the manes of his father, during the celebration of the sacrifice.

Harold, who had been so much alive to the feelings of friendship, was not insensible to the calls of parental affection: he was incensed at the ingratitude and the cruelty of the earl, and proceeded with all possible expedition to Orkney, to take vengeance on all those who had been accessory to the murder of his son. Torfeinar, hearing of his approach, prudently retired again into Caithness, and entered into a negociation with the king; the result of which was, that he and all the inhabitants of Orkney, as a mark of their general guilt, should pay sixty marks of gold as a fine for the murder of Halfdan. Einar paid the money himself, and received the lands of the proprietors in pledge for the payment of their share of the sum; and

he died a few years after the conclusion of this agreement.

Torfæus states,* that the murder of Halfdan took place about the year 893. Dr Barry, although he obviously borrows from this author, all that he has detailed respecting this transaction, declines adopting his chronology, and he fixes it about 930. This latter is nearer the calculation of Pinkerton.

From the death of Torfeinar,† until the establishment of Christianity in Orkney, A. D. 985, there appears to have occurred no event which in any degree immediately affected Zetland; nor was it during the intervening years

* Rerum Orcad. Hist. p. 20.

† The family of Ronald, count of Merca, was one of the most illustrious of its time. This nobleman had six sons, Ivar, Rollo, Thorer Tacitus, Hallad, Hrollauge, and Einar. The three last were natural sons. Ivar the eldest fell in the first expedition of Harold to Orkney and the west of Scotland. Rollo subdued Normandy; and his successors mounted the throne of England. Thorer Tacitus succeeded to his father's estates in Norway; and Hallad and Einar were earls of Orkney.

so much as visited by any of the earls who reigned over it. During this comparatively short period, no fewer than eight noblemen had, either jointly or in succession, been earls of Orkney and Zetland. It was one of the most turbulent eras in the history of the earldom; but as the events which took place relate exclusively to Orkney, it would be altogether foreign to my plan to introduce them here: a perusal of the eighth and ninth chapters of the history of the affairs of Orkney, by Torfæus, will amply gratify any reader who may wish more detailed information on the subject.

Long before the period now mentioned, itinerant monks had travelled in the islands, who endeavoured to propagate the Christian religion among the rude inhabitants, but apparently with little success, for the earls resisted its progress; and the mode in which it was at last accomplished was equally novel and effectual. Olaus Triguesson (Olafus Trygguinus) king of Norway, on his return from Ireland, touched at Orkney, and invited Sigurd the Second, or the Gross, as he is sometimes called, the reigning earl, on board of his ship: the earl accepted the

invitation, and carried along with him his son Hundius. After a few general observations, Olaus told Sigurd, that as he could not fail to know that his predecessors originally received, and he himself enjoyed, the earldom through the bounty of the Norwegian monarchs, he must be prepared to testify his respect for their successor, by complying with the proposal which he intended to make, and which was shortly this: that Sigurd should acknowledge him (Olaus) to be his liege lord, embrace the Christian faith, and be baptized. He said, that if the earl gave his ready assent to these requests, he would still continue his friend, but in case of refusal, he threatened both him and his family with instant destruction. Sigurd at first gave the king a modest, but flat denial, observing, that such a measure was incompatible with his conscience and his respect for the religion of his ancestors. Upon this, the enraged monarch seized the earl's son Hundius, and declared he would plunge his sword into his breast, if the father hesitated another moment. Sigurd yielded to the necessity of the occasion, professed himself a Christian, and was baptized; and all the people followed his ex-

ample. Olaus then returned to Norway, and carried Hundius with him as an hostage. He left behind him in Orkney many divines and learned men, to propagate the faith, and to instruct the people; and, although Hundius died soon after in Norway, Sigurd faithfully practised Christianity himself, and the inhabitants of all the islands under him did the same.* After the death of his son, considering himself no longer bound by any treaty to Olaus, Sigurd formed an alliance with Malcolm, king of Scotland, by marrying his daughter as a second wife.

Sigurd, on a pressing emergency, offered to cancel the claim which his predecessor Torfeinar had imposed on the lands of many of the proprietors, for their share of the fine laid on them by Harold Harfagre for the murder of his son, provided they would join his standard, and march against his enemies. This they did, and the lands were redeemed accordingly.

Above fifty years after the establishment of Christianity in the islands, Ronald, the grand-

* Rerum Orcad. Hist. p. 32.

son of earl Sigurd, under whom it had been introduced, visited Zetland, and levied troops in it, when on his way to Orkney to recover his patrimonial inheritance, of which his uncle Thorfin, the youngest of Sigurd's sons, had deprived him. Ronald was supported in his claims by Magnus, king of Norway; and after several campaigns of various event, when he had nearly accomplished his object, was surprised by his uncle, and both he and his companions inhumanly murdered.* This young man had been carried to Norway, when only ten years old, by his father Brusius, third son of earl Sigurd, and left there as an hostage with St Olaus, for the fulfilment of a promise which Brusius had come under, to do homage to Olaus for the share which he held of the earldom, in consideration of receiving assistance against his brother Thorfin. Ronald soon became the favourite of the king, and lived and was educated in the palace along with his sons. He had acquired the literature of the age, travelled in different countries, and was deemed the most accomplished nobleman of his time. Had he suc-

* Rerum Orcad. Hist. p. 62.

ceeded to the earldom, he would probably have instituted a more mild and equitable system of government in the islands than appears to have existed, and, by his example, lured his countrymen from those barbarous pursuits in which they so often engaged, and excited in them a relish for the arts of peace and the cultivation of the mind.*

Thorfin was succeeded by his sons Paul and Erlend, who enjoyed the earldom jointly, and lived long in habits of strict friendship and affection. Harold the Bold, then king of Norway, undertook an expedition against England, and he persuaded the earls of Orkney to accompany him. He left Norway, accompanied by his queen Elizabeth, his son Olave, and two daughters, and, after a passage of a few days,

* While the sons of earl Sigurd were contending for their respective shares of the isles of Orkney and Zetland, Canute the Great, king of Denmark, placed himself on the throne of England. This event took place in the year 1017. Eleven years after, Canute attacked Norway, expelled St Olaus, and kept possession of the crown until the death of that prince; and thus at one time swayed the sceptre over three powerful kingdoms.

arrived in Zetland. He spent some time in this country, and raised forces in it; and this was the second time that Zetland had been honoured with a royal visit, and both sovereigns had the same name. From Zetland Harold proceeded to Orkney, where he left the queen and the two princesses, but prince Olave followed his father. The fleet proceeded to the coast of England, and Scarborough was soon after taken by storm. It then sailed up the Humber, and the army having disembarked, the troops began to extend themselves in every direction.

The earls of Northumberland and Mercia collected some forces, and endeavoured to oppose the march of the Norwegians, but they were defeated in a great battle. Harold Godwin, who had but recently ascended the throne of England, indignant at this disgrace which his army had sustained, hastened to meet the enemy, whom he fell in with at Standford. A battle ensued, in which the Norwegians were totally routed, and king Harold himself slain. The English monarch had, notwithstanding this unjust attack on his dominions, the generosity to permit prince Olave to retire with

twenty ships and the remnant of his army, and the earls Paul and Erlend were fortunately among the number of survivors. This event took place in the year 1066.*

Earl Paul had a son whose name was Hakon, and his brother Erlend had two sons, Erlend and Magnus. That harmony which had hitherto been uninterrupted between the brother earls, was soon destroyed by the restless ambition of Hakon. Without apparently any other object in view, than to harass his cousins and disturb the peace of his father and uncle, he went to Norway, and having represented to king Magnus Barefoot many probable advantages that would result to him from an expedition to the westward, at last succeeded in persuading him to undertake it. This monarch having equipped a fleet, sailed for Orkney, and, immediately on his arrival there, seized the two earls who had so faithfully served his grandfather

* Soon after the battle of Standford, was fought the battle of Hastings, in which Harold Godwin was killed, and William the Conqueror, duke of Normandy, and a descendant of Ronald, first earl of Orkney, placed on the throne of England. Torfæus. Hume.

Harold in the English war, and sent them prisoners to Norway. He proclaimed his son Sigurd, although a boy of only ten years of age, viceroy of the islands, and compelled the sons of the earls to accompany him to Ireland. Erlend lost his life in the expedition, and Magnus displeased the king, and escaped to Scotland. He alternately lived with the king of that country and with bishops in England, and devoted himself to study, and did not return to Orkney until after the death of Magnus Barefoot. Hakon followed the Norwegian monarch from choice, wherever he went, and by his valour and enterprize soon acquired his confidence, and appears to have paid no attention to the earldom during the life of the king.

Magnus Barefoot was succeeded by his three sons, Eysthein, Sigurd, and Olave, who reigned jointly. From them Hakon obtained the half of the islands, with the title of earl. Magnus, his cousin, now thinking it safe to quit his voluntary exile, returned to Orkney, and made a similar application to the kings, and was also successful, so that the two cousins again divided the earldom between them. But the ambi-

tion and jealousy of Hakon could suffer no rival, and after living a short time in apparent habits of friendship with Magnus, he treacherously seized and murdered him, when engaged in an act of solemn devotion. The simplicity of his manners, and unaffected piety, acquired him the appellation of St Magnus, and his innocence was considered as unequivocally established by the number of miracles performed at his tomb. Among others who derived benefit from its holy influence, no fewer than eight Zetlanders were cured of various obstinate disorders, by presenting themselves at this supposed fountain of health. The assassination of St Magnus took place about the year 1115.*

Some time previous to the death of St Magnus, a divine of the name of William had been appointed bishop of Orkney and Zetland, and that situation was uniformly held ever after, until the Reformation.

Hakon, to expiate the guilt incurred by the murder of St Magnus, made a pilgrimage to

* Rerum Orcad. Hist. cap. xviii.

Jerusalem, and having bathed himself in the river Jordan, returned to Orkney cleansed of all iniquity, and died a few years after. He was succeeded by his sons Paul and Harold.

Harold was accidentally killed soon after, by putting on an embroidered garment which his mother Hegla and aunt Fanquhark had intended as a present to Paul. The latter therefore succeeded quietly to the possession of the whole earldom, and he immediately expelled the two ladies who had made the fatal vestment, together with his own sister Margaret, and nephew Erlend, all of whom fled over to Caithness.

Paul was shortly after disturbed in the quiet occupation of his fortune and honour, by the claims of a relation of his own, the nephew and heir of St Magnus. To understand the claims of this new competitor, it will be necessary to go a little back. It will be recollected, that when Magnus Barefoot landed in Orkney, at the persuasion of Hakon, he seized and sent earls Paul and Erlend prisoners to Norway, and carried their sons with him in the expedition. On his return home, he learned that the earls

had died broken-hearted during his absence; and to atone, in some measure, for the cruelty and injustice of his conduct to them, he married Gunnhilda, daughter of earl Erlend, and sister to St Magnus, to Kolus, a young officer, on whom he bestowed lands in Orkney, and ranked him among the nobility. They had two children, a son whose name was Kolus, and a daughter, Ingiride, and young Kolus was now the rival of earl Paul. He was one of the most accomplished young noblemen of his time, and uncommonly handsome in his person. In consideration of his various qualifications, and from his resemblance to earl Ronald, king Olave gave him the name of Ronald, created him an earl, and bestowed on him, as heir of St Magnus, the half of the islands, with the usual reservation of acknowledging him his liege lord.

To strengthen himself by every means in his power, Ronald formed an alliance with the exiled ladies, who, besides smarting under the vexation and disgrace which they had incurred by their conduct, were anxious that young Harold, the nephew of Paul, and son of his sister

Margaret by the earl of Athole, should enjoy a share of the earldom. Fanquhark therefore readily entered into his views, and it was agreed upon, that if they were successful, the estate should be divided equally between Ronald and Harold. Ronald first landed in Zetland, where it appears he remained a considerable time, either from choice, or detained by contrary winds.

In the mean time, Paul having received intelligence of the dangers that threatened him, hastily fitted out a squadron, with which he intended to proceed immediately to Zetland to attack Ronald, before he should present himself in Orkney. At day light in the morning, when under weigh, he perceived ten vessels in the Pentland Frith coming towards the islands, and conjecturing them to be Fanquhark's reinforcement to Ronald, determined to attack them before they should form a junction. He accordingly did so, and, after a desperate conflict, succeeded in capturing five of the largest. These he manned, and now mustering twelve ships in all, sailed for Zetland. Ronald had no idea of the near approach of his enemy, and

was not prepared for a sudden attack. Paul, on the other hand, knew well where Ronald's ships lay, and having surprised and killed the guards, possessed himself of the whole fleet, with all its arms and stores, without the loss of a man. Next day, Ronald, irritated by his recent loss, and impatient to revenge it, collected all the peasantry within his reach, and challenged Paul to a battle on shore; but the latter distrusting the fidelity of the Zetlanders, whom he knew to be attached to Ronald, and satisfied with the advantages which he had so easily obtained, declined the combat, and returned to Orkney. To ensure himself against any future surprise, he established light-houses over all the islands of Orkney, and he erected one at Fair-Isle, to give notice of the approach of any fleet from Zetland.

Ronald remained a considerable time in Zetland, and having collected a few merchant vessels, embarked the remains of his army, and returned to Norway. Instead, however, of being discouraged by his recent failure, he immediately began to recruit his forces, and by the assistance of the king and some of the no-

bility, saw himself in a short time at the head of a considerable armament. Before embarking, he addressed his soldiers in an appropriate speech, and to give every degree of solemnity to the occasion, he vowed, that if he, as heir of St Magnus, was successful in recovering his lawful inheritance, he would build a magnificent church in Kirkwall to his memory. A favourable wind coming on soon after, he sailed for Zetland, and arrived there in a few days. The Zetlanders were overjoyed at seeing him again, gladly enlisted under his banners, and furnished him with much useful information respecting the situation and force of his opponent.

To conceal his vicinity to Paul, and to favour an unexpected attack on the latter, Kolus, the father of Ronald, practised an ingenious stratagem. He sailed with the smallest vessels of the fleet towards Orkney, so as to be seen both from it and Fair-Isle. On the approach of the ships the fires were immediately lighted, and a general alarm given. But disguising the rigging so as to make the vessels look as little as possible, instead of advancing, he gradually

retired towards Zetland. The people who had assembled when the signal was given, now believing that this was an unnecessary alarm, and conceiving that what they had taken for ships were nothing but a few fishing boats, soon dispersed and returned home. Kolus having succeeded thus far, persuaded a Zetlander, accompanied by two other men, to go to Fair-Isle, and pretend that he was a native of Norway who had married a Zetland woman, by whom he had these two sons, and that having been plundered by Ronald's soldiers of all that he possessed, he had fled thither for refuge. This he did accordingly, and the statement appearing plausible, the islanders received the strangers with kindness. The latter daily occupied themselves in fishing, but whenever an opportunity presented itself, they poured water, as they had been directed, on the wood with which the fire was to be kindled, and at last so effectually drenched it, that when Ronald's fleet actually appeared, no effort could make it to burn.

Every previous arrangement having now been made, Ronald left Zetland with a fair

wind, and next day landed in Orkney without opposition, and was joined by many respectable individuals. Paul seeing that open force was unavailing, had recourse to negociation, and, through the medium of the bishop, obtained a truce for a fortnight, dividing the islands in the mean time between Ronald and himself, to furnish the necessary supplies to their respective forces.

While Paul was arranging matters for a final settlement with Ronald, his sister Margaret, and her husband the earl of Athole, surprised and carried him off to Athole, where, to preserve his life, he was compelled to convey over to his young nephew Harold, all his personal right to the earldom. This took place in 1136.*

Two years after his succession, Ronald received an embassy from the earl of Athole, demanding the half of the earldom for his son Harold, in whose favour he said Paul had resigned. To this proposal Ronald agreed, and

* Rerum Orcad. Hist. cap. xxi.—xxv.

the two noblemen lived together, for many years, in habits of the strictest friendship.

In 1149, while Eystein Ingius, and Sigurd Bronchus, the sons of Harold Gillus, reigned in Norway, the nobles persuaded Ingius to invite earl Ronald, who had been the friend of his father, to visit his court. Ingius approved of the suggestion, and the earl accepted this flattering invitation the year following, and took with him young Harold, his partner in the earldom. Both were treated with the most marked attention. Among the guests at court was a young man whose name was Enridius, who had just returned from Constantinople, and who, in relating his adventures, descanted much on the power, wealth, and splendor of Emmanuel, emperor of the Greeks. Ronald listened with great attention to these details, and at last formed the resolution of undertaking a voyage to the East himself. A party was immediately formed, of which Enridius was chosen one. Ronald soon after made preparations for returning to Orkney, to arrange matters for the projected expedition; and be-

sides receiving many valuable presents from his friends, king Ingius himself complimented him with two very handsome ships. The earls soon after sailed from Norway with a fair wind, but the second day they were overtaken by a storm, and in the darkness of night forced among the rocks. With great difficulty the lives of all were preserved, but the ships were dashed to pieces, and all the rich presents lost. During these disasters, earl Ronald preserved the utmost composure of mind, and with such coolness did he view the surrounding danger, that while he sat on the rocks waiting the approach of day-light, he amused himself by composing extempore poems. The next day the earls and the crews began to search for houses, and endeavoured to ascertain on what coast they had been shipwrecked. To their surprise and joy, as well as that of the inhabitants, it was soon discovered that they had been driven upon the islands of Zetland. The islanders were overjoyed to think that the earls were safe. Among other poems composed by earl Ronald on this occasion, which Torfæus says are still extant, and of considerable merit, is one on Einar, a res-

pectable proprietor of the farm of Gulberwick,* refusing, with mingled pride and hospitality, to accommodate twelve sailors, unless the earl himself would honour his house with his presence.

Ronald remained a considerable time in Zetland, and on leaving it, carried two native poets with him, who resided in his palace in Orkney, and who composed poems on many occasions; the name of the one was Armodus, and of the other Oddus. Armodus was a poet by profession.

In the course of another year, Ronald went to Norway to collect the companions of his eastern expedition; and after several unlooked for delays, occasioned chiefly by Enridius, they at last sailed for Orkney, where it was intended to rendezvous, and there the earl and the fleet arrived, with the exception of the ship of Enridius; it took a more northerly course, and was wrecked on Zetland. It was not until the next spring that the fleet could be again ready,

* Gulberwick is about three miles south-west from Lerwick.

when it sailed, and Ronald at length accomplished his long projected voyage to the east, and he and all his followers bathed in the river Jordan.*

While Ronald was performing this pilgrimage, the earldom was assailed from various quarters. King Ingius took an unfair advantage of the absence of Ronald and the youth of Harold, and sailing to Orkney the very year in which Ronald went to Jerusalem, compelled Harold to pay three, or, as some say, seven marks of gold, and acknowledge that the earldom was held of the crown of Norway. Erlend, the nephew of Paul, who had fled with the ladies when they were banished from Orkney, and had long remained in Caithness, now put in his claim to a share of the earldom; and Harold concluded a truce with him for a year, and agreed that he should hold the half of the estate, provided the king of Norway approved of the arrangement. Harold, too, was much harrassed by domestic misfortunes. Gunnius, the brother of his friend Swein, had seduced

* Rerum Orcad. Hist. cap. xxvi. xxx. xxxi.

his mother Margaret, and Erlend, who had also become enamoured of her, when he could not obtain Harold's consent to his marriage with Margaret, forcibly carried her off to Zetland. Being pursued thither by her son, he seized the castle in the island of Mousa,* which he strongly fortified, and there he resolved to hold out to the last. But Harold being prevailed on by the entreaties of his friends, consented to the marriage, and was reconciled to Erlend.

Ronald, on his return from the Holy Land, found himself under the necessity of agreeing to some of the changes which had taken place during his absence, and he was even forced to conclude a temporary peace with Erlend, by which Harold was excluded from any share of the earldom. This compulsory treaty was however soon set aside, and he and Harold resumed their friendship, and mutually agreed to oppose Erlend. The latter, although at first successful in his attacks on the earls, was at last de-

* The island of Mousa lies about twelve miles south from Lerwick, and the remains of the castle occupied by Erlend on this occasion are still to be seen.

feated by them, his whole fleet taken, and himself killed in the encounter.*

After the death of Erlend, the earls lived on terms of perfect harmony and friendship. In the summer of the year 1158 they went over to Caithness to hunt. Thorbiorn Clerk, the preceptor of Harold, had some time before been banished thither by Ronald, on account of his repeated crimes. Hearing of the arrival of the noblemen in his neighbourhood, he determined to be revenged on Ronald for the disgrace which he had so publicly inflicted on him. Accordingly, accompanied by three desperadoes, he concealed himself in those parts of the country through which he thought the earl was most likely to pass; and at length meeting him alone, they fell upon him and assassinated him. His body was carried to Orkney, with the respect due to his rank, and buried in the church of the Holy Virgin. Thirty-four years after, it was removed to the Cathedral of St Magnus, when Ronald was enrolled by Papal authority among the number of saints.†

* Rerum Orcad. Hist. cap. xxxii. xxxiii.

† Rerum Orcad. Hist. cap. xxxvi.

Ronald possessed many virtues, and some shining qualities. He was particularly fond of poetry, and he made considerable proficiency in it. Of all the earls he appears to have been most attached to Zetland, and to have spent more time in it than any of his predecessors. By the Zetlanders, and indeed by all his countrymen, he was highly esteemed and sincerely beloved; and by his undaunted intrepidity, gentle manners, and literary attainments, was calculated to have adorned a more polished age than the one in which he lived.

Ronald left an only daughter, named Ingigerbe. She had, before his death, married a gentleman whose name was Eric Sclagbreller, and was the mother of three sons and a daughter; but as they were all very young at the death of their grandfather, no interruption for some time was given to earl Harold, who therefore entered on the peaceable possession of the whole earldom. Some years after, however, he met with serious opposition from Harold, their eldest son, whom, to distinguish from the earl, we shall call young Harold. This young man applied to Magnus, king of Norway, and

William of Scotland for assistance. From the former he received a grant of half of the islands, and William gave him the half of Caithness, the share of the county which his grandfather Ronald had possessed, and both conferred on him the title of earl. With such countenance and assistance, young Harold sailed for Zetland, the favourite asylum of his grandfather when in similar circumstances, and there he reinforced his army. From thence he proceeded to Caithness, and having been joined by several gentlemen of respectability and their followers, he dispatched an embassy to earl Harold, to request that he would confirm the arrangements in his favour, recently made by the kings, and peaceably transfer to him his just share of the earldom. Earl Harold replied, that he would enter into no negociation, the object of which was to diminish his power or his influence. Upon receiving this answer, young Harold embarked his forces, and sailed for Orkney, where he arrived in safety, and there he disembarked and encamped. Earl Harold had in the mean time made the necessary preparations for receiving him, and in a short time disembarked his army near to that

of his opponent. During the debarkation, young Harold observing that the troops of the earl considerably outnumbered his own, proposed to his friends to retire to Thurso and obtain a reinforcement, before it would be prudent to engage. To this plan, which was obviously the wisest that under existing circumstances could have been adopted, several of his officers objected: a battle therefore took place, in which, after performing prodigies of valour, young Harold fell, and his army was defeated with great loss.

King William was deeply affected at the fate of his young friend, and resolved to revenge his death. With this view he solicited the aid of the warlike Reginald, son of Gudrod king of the Western Isles, who in the next campaign recovered all Caithness. Immediately after the return of this conqueror to the Hebrides, Harold disembarked a large army at Thurso, and soon re-occupied the province. A negociation was then set on foot, and an amicable settlement took place between him and king William.

This affair had scarcely been terminated when earl Harold was involved in another war, of equal importance and danger. He took part with Magnus, a pretender to the crown of Norway, against Suerer the lawful sovereign. The rebels were defeated in a great naval action, and Suerer took exemplary vengeance on all who were concerned in the rebellion. Harold, among the rest, was contented to get off with the loss of Zetland, which was confiscated as a fine for the breach of his allegiance, and annexed to the crown of Norway; but the king dying soon after, Harold recovered Zetland, and restored matters to their former state. This nobleman died in 1198.*

For a considerable number of years after the death of earl Harold, no change appears to have taken place in which Zetland was particularly concerned. About the year 1262, Gilbert the Second, the fifth earl from Harold, attended Hakon IV. of Norway, in his expedition against Alexander III. of Scotland. Hakon sailed from Norway with a powerful fleet,

* Rerum Orcad. Hist. cap. xxxviii. xxxix.

and after spending some time in Zetland to augment his force, proceeded on his voyage to the westward. In this war his success was various, but at last, worn out by the fatigues of successive campaigns, he was seized with a fatal distemper, about the time of his return to Orkney, and he died a few days after. Hakon was succeeded by his son Magnus V. between whom and Alexander, a peace was concluded in 1266, by which Magnus ceded to the Scotish monarch, his continental possessions in the north of Scotland, and all the islands on the coast, with the exception of those of Orkney and Zetland, on condition, that Alexander should pay a thousand marks sterling, within four successive years, and a hundred marks annually ever afterwards.*

About the year 1330, the Norwegian male line of earls was extinguished in the person of Magnus the Fifth, and a Caledonian dynasty succeeded.

The daughter of Magnus married Malis, earl of Strathern, who appears to have enjoyed the

* Rerum Orcad. Hist. lib. ii. p. 171.

earldom in right of his wife. This nobleman had several daughters by two marriages, and the eldest one by the second marriage married William St Clare, baron of Roslin. His son Henry, even during the lifetime of his father, claimed the whole earldom of Orkney and Zetland, in right of his grandfather Malis, and Hakon IV. conferred it on him, under many severe restrictions. Among others, besides promising to defend Orkney and Zetland from every external attack, and to aid the king in all his wars, offensive as well as defensive, he agreed to pay Hakon one thousand nobles of gold, and came under an engagement, not only never to take part with the clergy, but, if necessary, to assist the king against the bishop of Orkney. This deed of investiture was executed in August 1379.*

In 1380, the year after this investiture took place, occurred the extraordinary voyage to the north, of Nicolo Zeno, a Venetian nobleman. The family of the Zenos has long been eminent in Venice. Nicolo was the se-

* Rerum Orcad. Hist. lib. ii. p. 174. 177.

cond son of Pietro, sirnamed Dracone, from the dragon which he bore on his shield. Being rich, and skilled in navigation, he fitted out a ship, and passed the Straits of Gibraltar, with a view to visit Great Britain; but being overtaken by bad weather, the vessel was forced farther to the north, and he was shipwrecked on the coast of an island which he has denominated *Friesland,* and he and his crew were hospitably received by Zichmni, the prince or lord of the country. Friesland is described as being "situated on the coast towards Scotland," "posta della banda verso Scotia," and the inhabitants are said to have carried on a considerable trade in fish with Flanders, England, Scotland, and Norway. As Zichmni was engaged in a war at that time against Hakon, king of Norway, he was anxious to obtain the assistance of Zeno, and as an inducement, appointed him admiral of his fleet. It appears that Zichmni had defeated the king of Norway in a great battle the preceding year, and his next object was to attack Iceland. But receiving information of the king's approach, and being interrupted by unfavourable winds, he changed his plan, and fell upon *Estland,*

which lies between Friesland and Norway, and he plundered seven of the islands which compose that country: viz. *Talas*, *Broas*, *Iscant*, *Trans*, *Mimant*, *Dambre*, and *Bres*. After having finished this expedition, Zichmni returned to Friesland, and left Zeno with several small barks in Bres, where he built a fort, and spent the winter. From Bres, Zeno made a voyage to Greenland, which place he describes, and also the monastery of St Thomas in it. On his return to Friesland, he wrote to Venice for his brother Antonio to join him, which the latter did; and, at the decease of Nicolo, Antonio was created admiral by Zichmni, and he remained fourteen years in Friesland.

The account of the voyages of the two Zenos was extracted by one of their own relations of the name of Marcolini, from original letters preserved in the archives of Venice, and published in 1558, at which time Marcolini possessed the original map drawn by Antonio Zeno, illustrative of these discoveries, and which was open to general inspection.*

* Vide Forster's History of the Voyages and Discoveries made in the North. B. ii. sect. 13.

Some have doubted the authenticity of this voyage, from the difficulty of reconciling the position of the country and the names of the places said to have been visited by Zeno, with those with which we are at present acquainted; but Forster, who places implicit confidence in the details, has ingeniously obviated most of the doubts which have been entertained on the subject. Friesland he conceives to have been Orkney, from the situation assigned it, the fishing carried on in it, and even the name itself. The capital is described as being situated in an island, surrounded with others. This appears to be "the island of Faira or Fera, which is also called *Ferasland*, and belongs to the Orkneys, being so encompassed with various islands that it appears to lie quite in a gulph or bay; and here, too, a great number of herrings are caught yearly. So that this spot appears to be *Fairesland*, by abbreviation *Friesland*." This is also further proved, he thinks, by a reference to the situation of some of the western isles mentioned in the voyage. Zichmni must have been earl Henry Sinclair. It appears, that previously to the investiture of this nobleman, several candidates had put in claims to the

earldom of Orkney and Zetland, some of whom the king of Norway had acknowledged; but they were all successively overcome by earl Henry, who, by vanquishing his representatives, might be said to have defeated the king. *Estland*, both from the situation assigned it, as well as the orthography, Forster conceives to have been Zetland; *Talas*, *Teal* or *Zeal*, to be Yell; *Broas*, Burra; *Iscant*, Unst; *Trans*, Trondra; *Mimant*, Mainland; *Dambre*, Hamer, (a place in Mainland to the northward), and *Bres*, Bressa.*

There is certainly something singular in the circumstance of this voyage happening about the time of the investiture of earl Henry; and the severe restrictions under which he was laid by king Hakon, before the latter would recognize his title to the earldom, imply the precarious influence which the king possessed over the islands, and demonstrate that they were

* Forster's Voyages, lib. cit.

These names, it may be observed, although somewhat different from those at present in use in Zetland, have nothing to which they so nearly correspond in Fero, Orkney, or the Hebrides.

often the scene of internal commotion. That cotemporary writers have not mentioned the occurrences related by Zeno, is not to be wondered at. There were few to describe them; and in an illiterate age, many important events take place, of which posterity receives no intelligence. As the pronunciation of the names, both of individuals and of places, is subjected to the ignorance of the inhabitants and the caprice of foreigners, it is liable to frequent changes, and but few places retain long their first appellations. These causes operate no doubt,, more or less, in every country, but their effects will be most conspicuous in rude societies, where the language having been reduced to no fixed standard, is liable to perpetual variation. Indeed the names of places in Zetland are both pronounced and written differently at this day by the inhabitants themselves, and they are generally mistaken by strangers. The discrepancies, therefore, in the orthography of Zeno with that of the present time, are not of themselves sufficient to invalidate his statements; but it must be admitted, that succeeding navigators have not been able to determine with accuracy the geo-

graphical position of his *Friesland.* Martin Forbisher, who in the reign of Queen Elizabeth was sent, in 1567, to try and discover a north-west passage to India, fell in with a land in 61° north latitude, which he took to be the Friesland of Zeno, but there he found a great quantity of ice. The parallel of latitude, however, is that of Zetland, but Forbisher did not examine the country, nor does he appear to have ascertained its longitude; and his observation respecting it, is, on the whole, both short and imperfect.

In 1391, Malis Spere, a cousin of earl Henry, was killed in Zetland, with seven of his companions, in a conflict which took place between Malis and the earl. The remainder of the party, consisting of seven persons, among whom was a young man of some distinction, having seized a boat at Scallaway, effected their escape to Norway.* The circumstances which led to this fatal encounter are now unknown. It is probable that Malis had been engaged in exciting an insurrection against the earl, and if we

* Rerum Orcad. Hist. p. 178.

may judge from the hazardous nature of the flight of his associates, their guilt must have been as great as that of their leader.

Earl Henry was first married to a daughter of the king of Denmark, by whom he had no issue, and afterwards to a daughter of lord Dirlton, by whom he had a son and several daughters. The time of his death is not accurately known.

This nobleman was succeeded by his son, whose name was Henry, whom we may call Henry the Second. Soon after his accession to the earldom, Henry was appointed chief attendant to James I. in his voyage to France. The vessel in which they sailed had not proceeded farther than Flamborough, when it was intercepted by a ship belonging to Cley in Norfolk, and both the prince and his companion were carried prisoners to London, by order of Henry IV. The capture of James took place in March 1405, and nineteen years elapsed before he recovered his liberty.* Earl Henry obtained per-

* Bowar, as quoted by Pinkerton, History of Scotland, vol. i. p. 82.

mission to pay a short visit to Scotland, on leaving his brother John as an hostage for his return. This he accordingly did; and having redeemed the pledge obtained the release of his brother.

In 1418, John Sinclair did homage to Eric, king of Denmark, for Zetland;* and he appears to have done it in his own name. Perhaps the numerous and important transactions in which his brother Henry was at that time engaged, prevented him from renewing those obligations of fidelity to Eric, which, as the vassal of the Danish crown, it was his duty to perform; and, to save the most tangible part of the earldom, John became his substitute.

Earl Henry died in 1420, and he was succeeded by his son William, who soon after appears to have been as much engrossed with the business of the state, and to have paid as little attention to the claims on the earldom as his father, for king Eric actually superseded him in the government of it. Between the years

* Rerum Orcad. Hist. lib. ii. p. 178.

1422 and 1434, divines and private gentlemen were appointed to the government of the earldom by the king of Denmark; but as no titles of nobility were conferred on any of them, they appear to have acted as *locum tenentes* during the absence or the minority of the lawful heir.

When the affairs of Scotland had been happily settled, and James I. seated on the throne, William began to turn his attention to his own more immediate concerns, and in a short time preferred his claim to the earldom of Orkney. King Eric appointed Thomas, bishop of Orkney, and other learned men, to search the archives, and to trace the pedigree of the earl. This was done with the most scrupulous accuracy, and it having been ascertained beyond all doubt, that William was lineally descended from the very first of the earls, he was regularly invested in 1434, on the same terms as his grandfather Henry had been by king Hakon.*

The sum which Alexander III. of Scotland had, by treaty, bound himself to pay to the

* Rerum Orcad. Hist. p. 183.

kings of Norway, as a compensation for their cession to the crown of Scotland of some of the western isles and northern provinces, had never been regularly paid. The treaty had been confirmed by Robert I. in 1312, and again by James I. in 1426,* but the payment had been neglected from before 1426 to 1457, when Christiern I. made a threatening demand on James II. for the amount, which now was uncommonly great. The yearly payment had been denominated the *Annual of Norway*. Although only one hundred marks yearly, yet, by adding the penalty of ten thousand for each failure, it had accumulated during forty years to ten millions Sterling.† A rupture was likely to have ensued between James and Christiern, when both agreed to submit the matter to the arbitration of Charles VII. of France. Accordingly, ambassadors from both countries appeared at the court of the French monarch. The Danes simply produced the last confirmed treaty between Eric and James I. and contended that it had been palpably violated. The

* Rerum Orcad. Hist. p. 198.

† Rerum Orcad. Hist. p. 184.

Scots, on the other hand asserted, that no penalty could be lawfully charged on the bond, as the treaty had not been infringed, but merely neglected; and they even hinted, that the silence on the part of Denmark, for a period of nearly forty years, amounted almost to a prescription.

Charles having weighed their respective arguments, and being unwilling to offend either party, recommended a marriage between the young prince of Scotland and the princess of Denmark, as the most equitable and agreeable mode of terminating the difference. To this proposal, after some deliberation, both parties were inclined to accede; and the negociations towards carrying it into effect had proceeded a considerable length, when they were interrupted by the unexpected death of the Scotish king.*

Six years after, Christiern renewed his demand for payment of the debt, accompanied at the same time with a polite letter to James III.

* Rerum Orcad. Hist. p. 184, 185.

expressive of sentiments of the strictest friendship. James replied in a manner equally conciliatory, and promised to send ambassadors to Denmark to settle both it and some other affairs. Accordingly, a suitable embassy proceeded to Copenhagen, and the ambassadors having finally arranged every thing, a treaty was concluded, and signed on the 8th of September 1468. It is of considerable length, but the articles in it more immediately respecting the islands, are the following: That the Danish claim for the arrears, under the appellation of the *Annual of Norway*, with all its penalties, should be cancelled, and no demand of that kind made ever after, on the king, the queen, their children, or their heirs: That the princess's portion should be sixty thousand florins; ten thousand of which were to be paid before she left Denmark, and for the remaining fifty thousand, Christiern, with the consent of his prelates, peers, and ministers, assigned the islands of Orkney as a pledge or security, to be retained till their redemption by him or any of his successors: That if the queen, at the king's death, should choose to leave Scotland, she should, instead of this portion, receive

one hundred and twenty thousand florins, of which fifty thousand should be considered as paid on the restitution of Orkney to the crown of Denmark.*

Soon after the signing of this treaty, Christiern, unable to pay the ten thousand florins which he had engaged to give to the princess before she left Denmark with the ambassadors, pledged Zetland, as he had done Orkney, but for eight thousand only, while the remaining two thousand were to be paid immediately.† As Christiern cherished the hope, that either he himself, or some of his successors might redeem these islands at some future period, nothing could induce him to relinquish his right to them. He even made it an article in the treaty, that they should retain their laws and customs the same as they had done before their transference to the Scotish crown.

In 1470, two years after the signing of this treaty, by which the power of the Scotish

* Rerum Orcad. Hist. p. 191.

† Rerum Orcad. Hist. p. 188.

monarchy was firmly consolidated in its northern extremity, William Sinclair completed the transaction, by solemnly resigning to king James III. for a suitable compensation, his entire right to the earldom of Orkney and Zetland.* Thus terminated an illustrious title, which had descended in lineal succession for nearly six hundred years.

Few earldoms have been more celebrated than that of Orkney and Zetland, whether we consider the period of its duration, extent of territory, or the relative influence of the noblemen who possessed it. Besides their intrinsic claim to power and independence, they frequently increased their stability, and added lustre to their rank, by matrimonial connections with the royal families of Norway and Scotland; and the monarch who now sways the British sceptre is descended from Ronald, the first of its earls. From the disjoined nature of the different parts which composed their estate, dissension and civil broils were frequent; and it required much skill and political ability to possess an

* Scotstarvet.

efficient disposal of its united resources. Zetland appears to have been held by but a precarious tenure, for in it, every adventurer was certain of raising troops, although he had often no other ostensible object than to harrass and distress the lawful chief. This tendency to disaffection proceeded, in part, from its distance from the seat of government, which prevented the inhabitants from feeling any particular attachment to the persons of the earls, and also from the latter seldom residing among them. When they did visit them, as in the instance of St Ronald, although even his residence was comparatively short, their zeal for his cause, and affection for himself, were unfeigned and steady.

The kings of Norway seem always to have looked upon the earls with a jealous eye, and to have been constantly impressed with a belief that their authority over them was more apparent than real; for, although it was from them that the titles of nobility were derived, yet they never omitted an opportunity of imposing fines, and compelling the different noblemen to renew their oaths of allegiance. The kings of Scotland had much more reason to be alarm-

ed at their vicinity to these insular potentates, for a considerable part of their continental territories had been wrested from them by the earls, and were long held by them without any acknowledgment. It is true, they sometimes fomented dissensions among the pretenders to their estates, on whom they frequently conferred titles of rank; but until the reigns of Alexander II. and Alexander III. they never made any serious effort for the recovery of their lost hereditary dominions.

On the jealousies which subsisted between these rival courts, depended the existence of this little kingdom, and the voluntary resignation of it at last, by one of its own sovereigns, was an occurrence which could scarcely have been expected. But the period of its natural decay was fast approaching, and earl William only anticipated that event by a few years. Ever since the death of Magnus the Fifth, no earl had resided in Orkney. Possessed of large estates in Scotland, and being in some measure unaccustomed to the predatory habits of their Norwegian predecessors, they felt no wish to change their modes of life, and, by removing

to a distance from court, lose those advantages which a proximity to the person of their sovereign was calculated to confer. In the event of a war breaking out between the crowns of Denmark and Scotland, William was aware that he must decide between his fidelity to the Danish monarch and his attachment to his native sovereign. To have maintained a neutrality would have been impossible, and an adherence to either of the parties would have infallibly deprived him of the estates and honours which he derived from the other.

Section III.

State of the Zetland Islands after they were transferred to the Crown of Scotland.

The year after the exchange had been effected between James III. and earl William, the islands of Orkney and Zetland were annexed to the crown by act of Parliament; and so determined was the king that they should for ever after be attached to the crown, that it was an article

in the act, that they should not in future be given to any but to the son of a king born in lawful wedlock.*

After the annexation of the islands to the crown of Scotland, James III. turned his mind to their improvement. He erected Kirkwall into a royal burgh, and made several internal arrangements to the advantage of Orkney; but it does not appear that Zetland at that time reaped any peculiar benefit from the change. Both it and Orkney were governed for many years by viceroys and commissioners.

In 1489, in the reign of James IV. lord Sinclair, of the family whose ancestors had sold the earldom, contrived to be appointed one of the commissioners for collecting the king's rents in Orkney and Zetland; and in 1501 the family obtained a lease of the earldom for nineteen years, at the low annual rent of six hundred and fifty pounds Scots. Not satisfied with the advantages which they derived from this beneficial lease, and availing themselves of

* Haddington's Collection of Acts of Parliament.

the minority of James V. in 1529 they made a bold, though unsuccessful effort, to regain the absolute possession of what they still looked upon as their ancient and legitimate inheritance. With this view lord Sinclair, and his father, the earl of Caithness, having collected a considerable body of troops, made a descent on Orkney; but they were met by sir James Sinclair, a natural son of the same family, then governor of Kirkwall, at the head of a strong body of islanders. A desperate conflict ensued, in which the earl and five hundred men were killed, and lord Sinclair and the rest of the party made prisoners. In vindication of this outrageous conduct, and to extenuate the guilt and ingratitude of the Sinclair family, it has been alleged, that lord Sinclair had received a commission to supersede sir James in his government, and that the fatal battle which ensued was occasioned by the resistance of sir James to resign his command.*

In 1530 king James and the government dissolved the act of annexation of the islands

* Lesly, p. 430.

to the crown, and granted them in feu to James, earl of Murray, natural brother to the king, and his heirs male, with reversion to the crown in the event of failure in them. But on a careful reconsideration of the matter, this deed was soon after revoked as injurious to the public interest, and the islands were again annexed to the crown, by a special act to that purpose.*

To regulate the government, and to settle the internal police of the distant parts of the kingdom, James V. undertook a voyage to the north in 1540. He visited the Orkney islands and the Hebrides, but did not proceed the length of Zetland. He received and redressed complaints from that country however, during his expedition against the lawless intrusions of the fishing vessels of Holland, Flanders, and Bremen, on the native fishers. Among others it was stated, that a boat, with twenty people, had been sunk by the guns of the strangers. The king sent lord Maxwell, the admiral, thither, to inquire into the merits of the case. This

* Great Seal Register. Barry.

nobleman having found these foreign fishers obstinate and refractory, ordered one or two of the sailors of each of the fishing vessels on board of his own ship, and carried them to Leith. Being brought before the privy council, they were charged to abstain from such hostile practices, under the penalty of severe retaliation; and letters were sent to the different states, declaring the king's firm resolution, in case of non-compliance with his just demands, to carry these threats into execution.*

At the death of James V. the earl of Arran became regent, and in 1542 he gave a lease of the islands of Orkney and Zetland to the earl of Huntly, who held them a considerable number of years.†

* Pinkerton's History of Scotland, vol. ii. p. 367, 368. Seldom has Europe possessed more able sovereigns than those who flourished at this time, and were the cotemporaries of James V. Henry VIII. reigned in England; Francis I. the patron of literature, swayed the sceptre in France; the sagacious and political Charles V. was king of Spain and emperor of Germany; and the elegant and accomplished Leo X. filled the Papal chair.

† Lesly.

In 1554 Mary of Guise, king James's queen, having been declared regent, among other unpopular changes, created Bonot, a Frenchman, governor of Orkney.*

Soon after the arrival in Scotland, in 1561, of Mary the young and unfortunate queen, she gave a grant of the islands to her natural brother, lord Robert Stewart, and his heirs male, with reversion to the crown.†

About this time the Reformation had taken place in Scotland, and Adam Bothwell was the first Protestant bishop who enjoyed the ecclesiastical benefice of Orkney and Zetland. Having been appointed one of the Lords of Session some time after his nomination to the see, he exchanged the revenues of his bishoprick with earl Robert for the abbacy of Holyrood-house, which he held at that time, and the earl collected the bishop's tithes in Orkney along with his own rents.

* Lesly.

† Great Seal Register. Barry.

In 1566 Mary revoked the grant in favour of lord Robert Stewart, and bestowed the islands on the earl of Bothwell, with the title of Duke of Orkney,* in consequence of her determination to marry that nobleman. Bothwell had forfeited by his crimes every claim to this honour before it was conferred on him. In his flight from justice he took refuge in the Orkney and Zetland isles, and subsisted himself and his followers for some time, by robbing and plundering every vessel that fell in his way. There is a tradition respecting his final escape from his pursuers, peculiar to Zetland. After the dispersion of his small squadron by Kirkaldy of Grange and Murray of Tullibardin, the former, in a ship called the Unicorn, pursued him so closely, that when the vessel which carried Bothwell escaped by the north passage of Bressa sound, Kirkaldy came in by the south, and continued to chase to the northward. When his enemies were gaining fast upon him, and his capture appeared inevitable, Bothwell's pilot, who was well acquainted with the course, contrived to sail close by a sunken

* Robertson, vol. i. p. 270.

rock, which he passed in safety, and Kirkaldy following nearly in the same direction, but unconscious of the hidden danger, struck his vessel against it and was wrecked. The rock, which can be seen at low water, is called the Unicorn to this day.

Zetland about this time appears to have been but imperfectly known even to the Scots themselves. The learned and elegant Buchanan describes it as a distant and almost uninhabited land of singular sterility. He says that the sea-coast only is inhabited by the human species, and that birds alone occupy the interior parts of the country. The island of *Yell*, the second in point of magnitude, he states to be so truly wild and barren, that except brought forth there, no animal can exist in it. He adds, however, that a merchant from Bremen in his time resided in Yell, who supplied the inhabitants abundantly with foreign commodities. "Ab ea ad decem millia septentrionem versus est Zeal sita, supra viginti millia longa, octo lata; adeo fera, ut nullum animal, nisi illic natum fuerat. In hoc habitare dicitur Bremensis mercator, qui omnes merces exoticas, quarum illic usus abun-

de omnibus suppeditet."* The latter observation evidently alludes to the mode in which the fishing was carried on at that time in Zetland by the Flemings and Dutch. These foreigners had small factories in Zetland, and not only fished themselves on the coast, but bought cargoes of fish from the Zetlanders, whom they furnished at a cheap rate with all the materials for carrying on the fishing, and supplied them besides with several articles of luxury. Buchanan, however, seems to have been well acquainted with the oppressive proceedings of these foreigners to the native Zetland fishers; and he characterizes their injustice with his usual force and felicity. "Piscatores enim qui ex Anglia, Hollandia, cæterisque propinquis oceano regionibus, piscatum in illa maria singulis annis præternavigant omnia pro arbitrio rapiunt et ferunt."

In 1580 lord Robert Stewart prevailed on James VI. to create him by letters patent earl of Orkney; but his rapacity and cruelty to the islanders induced the king, nine years after

* Rerum Scot. Hist. 4to Edit. lib. i.

it had been bestowed, to revoke the grant, and he conferred the islands on sir John Maitland of Thirlstone, the chancellor of Scotland, and sir Ludovick Ballantine the justice-clerk, jointly, but they soon after resigned them to the crown. After the resignation of these gentlemen, lord Robert Stewart, in 1591, revived his claim, and obtained a joint grant of the islands of Orkney and Zetland, in favour of himself and his son Patrick. This grant was revoked before it was a year old, and the islands once more annexed to the crown.*

During the nine succeeding years, the islands appear to have remained annexed to the crown, but in 1600 Patrick Stewart, son of earl Robert,

* Great Seal Register.

In 1588, when the Spanish Armada had been repeatedly defeated by the English fleet, and forced to proceed northward and return to Spain by the ocean, it encountered several heavy gales in the latitude of the Orkney islands. In one of them the flag ship of the duke of Medina Sidonia was wrecked on Fair-Isle, and his excellency, the admiral, resided some time in the house of Mr Sinclair of Quendal, in the parish of Dunrossness, and met with every civility and attention in the power of his host to bestow.

obtained a new grant of them in his own favour. Patrick resided a considerable time in Zetland, and built a castle at Scallaway. This building appears to have been erected in a short time, for it bears date 1600, the very year in which Patrick received his grant. The erection of so splendid an edifice at that period, could not fail to have been attended with difficulty and expence; but the oppressive measures of the earl overcame every obstacle. He compelled as many of the people to work as he chose, and, in order to supply him and his numerous followers with provisions, the peasants were obliged to bring in regularly sheep and cattle to the castle; and on their failing to produce the articles in kind, they were under the necessity of making up the deficiency in money. This imposition once established, was afterwards recognised as a regular tax, under the denomination of *sheep* and *ox penny*, and it forms an item of the crown rents to the present day.

The acts of injustice and oppression practised by this nobleman are innumerable. Extravagant and rapacious, he never hesitated at the

means which he employed to attain the object he had in view, provided it was accomplished; and frequently, on slight pretences, he imprisoned individuals, and confiscated their property. Among others of a similar kind, may be mentioned the following: " Patrick, earl of Orkney, in a disposition of the lands of Sand (parish of Sansting) to Jerom Umphray, narrates, that he had evicted *seven* merks of that land from Poul Nicholson, in Cullswick, for *stealing a swine*; and that he had evicted six merks from ——— in Cullswick, for *stealing bolts* from his lordship's wood; probably some piece of wreck which had been drawn into Cullswick."*

It has been already mentioned, that Adam Bothwell, the bishop, had exchanged the temporalities of his see with earl Robert, for the abbacy of Holyrood-house, which this nobleman held at that time. Bothwell was succeeded by bishop Law. On the arrival of the latter in Orkney, Patrick resisted the collection of his

* Statistical Account of Aithsting and Sansting, by the Rev. Patrick Barclay, vol. vii. p. 584.

tithes, alleging, that an exchange had taken place some time before, between his father and bishop Bothwell. It was in vain for bishop Law to urge, that a private bargain between two individuals, respecting situations tenable only during their lifetime, could not be understood to extend to their successors. Patrick had already enjoyed the revenues of this rich clerical benefice, and was unwilling to renounce his claims to the means of extravagance, now that his increasing dissipation had overwhelmed him in debt. He therefore persisted in acts of cruelty and oppression, and for a time withstood all the power of his spiritual opponent. The latter, however, was not of a temper to submit to wanton injustice. He collected and substantiated facts of the earl's violence and oppression, and exhorted the people to apply for redress. Patrick, during the absence of his relation William Bruce of Sumburgh, had burnt his houses and carried off a considerable part of his effects, and the bishop prevailed on the latter to join in the process carrying on against the earl. These different applications were at last successful. Patrick was brought

to trial, convicted of the crimes laid to his charge, and executed at Edinburgh in 1614.

Soon after this event had been accomplished, the bishop wisely made arrangements to prevent the future occurrence of any similar intermixture of the tithes of his see with the rents of the crown. The church lands and those of the earls had been from time immemorial intermixed, not only in the same island, but in the smallest farms, so that it was often a source of serious dispute among the cultivating tenants, to which party particular portions of them belonged. To remedy this evil, bishop Law exchanged with James VI. the whole of the church lands, both in Orkney and Zetland, that were thus intermixed, for an equivalent in lands in the Mainland of Orkney and the islands immediately adjacent to it; and the more effectually to guard against the possibility of interference, the bishop was invested with the sole right of administering justice within the limits of his own property.*

* Barry's History of Orkney, p. 252.

With bishop Law episcopacy was restored, and it continued to be practised until 1638, when bishop Graham, who had succeeded him, was divested of his bishoprick, and presbyterianism again established. This form of church government continued until 1662, and during that time the bishop's rents of Orkney and Zetland were granted by Parliament to the city of Edinburgh. In 1662 episcopacy was restored by Charles II. and the non-conforming presbyterian clergy were compelled, either to relinquish their livings, or to sign the articles presented to them.* This order of things continued until the revolution in 1688, when the presbyterian church government was restored in Scotland. It appears, however, that the ministers of Orkney and Zetland had held their situations during the prevalence of episcopacy in the other parts of the kingdom, which must, in a great measure, be ascribed to their remote situation. In 1700, the General Assembly of Scotland sent a commission, consisting of "seven ministers and one ruling elder," to settle the church affairs of Orkney and Zetland. Brand

* Hume, vol. vii.

was one of the number, and he published, on his return to Edinburgh, a description of both these countries.* No bishop ever resided in Zetland, but some of the arch-deacons of Tingwall were promoted to the rank of bishop, both in Orkney and Norway.†

After the death of earl Patrick, the inhabitants of Orkney and Zetland implored the king that he would take their past sufferings into his most serious consideration, and prevent their future occurrence. His Majesty lent a favourable ear to their petitions, and by open proclamation declared it to be his fixed resolution, that the islands should be inseparably annexed to the crown. To quiet their fears, he appointed the bishop governor *ad interim*, of whose zeal for their interest and welfare they had recently experienced so decided a proof.‡ But as on former occasions the decree of Parliament had been revoked when it ran counter to the views of the sove-

* Brand's Description of Orkney, Zetland, and Caithness.

† Torfæus.

‡ Privy Seal Register.

reign; so, notwithstanding the public and solemn declaration to the contrary, which had been recently made, the king superseded the bishop, and, in 1614, by a new grant, conveyed the islands to Sir James Stewart of Kilsyth, afterwards lord Ochiltree, in the capacity of farmer-general. His lordship, however, appears to have been actuated by the same love of gain and spirit of rapacity which had actuated his predecessors of the same name. Aware of the precarious tenure by which he held his situation, he was anxious to improve the occasion, and to reap as abundant a harvest as he could. His repeated acts of violence, cruelty, and injustice, at length roused the people to come forward. They prosecuted the oppressor, and obtained his dismissal.*

Nothing could be more unfavourable for the moral character of the islanders, than the conduct of such rulers. Their minds could have no idea of superior rank and wealth, but as they afforded means to their possessors of indulging in fresh acts of violence and lawless

* Privy Council Register.

oppression. The condition of the inhabitants of these remote islands, during these feudal times, must have been very distressing indeed; and the contemplation of it cannot fail to excite a lively feeling of regret, that the more elevated ranks of life, which afford so many opportunities of doing good, are often shamefully converted into instruments of mischief and misery to thousands; and it leaves an impression little to the credit of humanity, that poverty and dependence are among the chief incentives to actions which indicate benevolence.

In consequence of repeated misconduct on the part of the earls and the farmers, the landholders petitioned Charles I. to take them under his own immediate protection, and no longer permit them to be harassed and oppressed by intermediate rulers. The king as usual listened to their solicitations, and, in 1633, an act was passed confirming all the former deeds in their favour.*

* Acts of Parliament, Ch. I.

Between 1633 and 1643, the islands, notwithstanding the act of Parliament to the contrary, were let in lease to different individuals; and the same oppressive system of management appears to have been practised towards the poor inhabitants. A change of masters seldom produced a change of measures, and the decrees of Parliament were no longer binding in their favour, than suited the convenience of the sovereign.

In 1643, king Charles I. granted the islands, with all the jurisdictions and royalties attached to them, to William, earl of Morton, under a mortgage, redeemable by the crown on the payment of thirty thousand pounds Sterling.* But the earl did not long enjoy his sovereignty; for the usurpation of Cromwell stript him, not only of this, but of his other possessions. Cromwell originally built the fort at Lerwick, now called Fort-Charlotte, and kept a garrison in it. The islanders appear to have been but little affected in their domestic affairs by this great political change. They were under the

* Great Seal Register.

direction of subordinate rulers, and were compelled to pay whatever was demanded of them.

Soon after the Restoration, about the year 1662, one of the earls of Morton resumed his claims on the islands of Orkney and Zetland, of which he stated his ancestors had been unjustly deprived; and to consolidate his right he obtained a new grant, also in the form of a mortgage, though not in his own name, but in that of Viscount Grandison. It was understood, however, that the latter held it only in trust for the Morton family. These noblemen managed the affairs of the islands by substitutes, and took no personal concern in their welfare. Alexander Douglas of Spynie, a factor or chamberlain to one of the earls of Morton, who came to Zetland in 1664, is stated to have considerably increased the number of feu-duties payable to the crown. He was invested with full powers to grant charters to the heritors and udallers on their udal lands, to hold them of the crown; and many of those who had not previously received charters from the crown, took holdings of

Spynie. At that time there were many individuals in Zetland, who held small portions of land by udal tenure, or undisputed possession, without the holder being able to shew any document proving its origin and acquisition. Spynie, not content with granting charters when they were demanded of him, has been accused of having exceeded his powers, by endeavouring to persuade the ignorant udallers, that their right to the property which they held was insecure, and that they might easily be deprived of it; but by obtaining, through him, charters from the crown, this insecurity would be obviated. Many listened to his suggestions, and complied with his admonitions, and thus added to the number of their public burdens. This grant to the Morton family was declared null and void in 1669; the earl and his factor were thereby deprived of their situations, the islands annexed to the crown, and erected into a stewartry.*

After this event, the islands remained under the management of Government for thirty

* Act xiii. Parliament 2. Ch. II.

years, and were let, at short leases, to farmers. The shortness of the period of the lease was no doubt meant to be a check on the conduct of the farmers-general; and it appears to have had this effect to a certain extent, for but few complaints were preferred during this period.

The annexation of the islands of Orkney and Zetland by act of Parliament to the crown of Scotland, appears to have been made without the formal concurrence of the king of Denmark; for we nowhere find an express renunciation of his right to them. In the appendix to the edition of the history of Scotland by Hector Boethius, published in 1570, it is asserted, that when queen Margaret bore a son and heir to king James III. her father, Christiern of Denmark, was so gratified at the circumstance, that he renounced to James every claim to Orkney and Zetland. Torfæus, who wrote in 1715, maintains a contrary opinion, and states that these islands had been claimed no fewer than seven times since the deed of impignoration by the marriage of Margaret to king James. The last time, he says, that the claim was preferred and its validity recognised

was in 1667, when peace was concluded at Breda between Denmark and England, under the guarantee of the king of France and the States-General of Holland. When the Danes, during the discussion, brought forward the claim on the islands of Orkney and Zetland, the English ambassadors replied that they had received no instructions on that head, but, to satisfy the Danes, an article to the following effect was introduced into the treaty: "That the suspension of the restitution of the said islands (Orkney and Zetland), should not operate to the prejudice of his most serene and powerful Majesty, the king of Denmark and Norway, nor diminish his right to recover them, which they acknowledge to remain open, entire, and uninfringed, and which he may prefer at a more convenient time."* Although the plea by the Scotish ambassadors at the negociation of the marriage treaty, that the revival of the claim concerning the *Annual of Norway* was doubtful, as being nearly prescribed, may have been valid, yet that very treaty contains a clause which leaves open the right to redeem

* Rerum Orcad. Hist. lib. iii. p. 227, 228.

the islands by any of the Danish monarchs, and no argument can be fairly drawn in opposition to it from any discussion previous to that treaty. But the silence of the kings of Denmark on this subject since 1667, has surely buried the claim in prescription, and it may now be considered as for ever lost.

Soon after the union of the kingdoms, James, then earl of Morton, complained of the reduction of the grant of the islands made to his family, and represented, at the same time, their uncultivated state, which he promised to improve if they were again bestowed on him. His application was successful, and he obtained in 1707 a new grant from Parliament to himself and his heirs, subject to an annual feu-duty of five hundred pounds, but redeemable by the crown, on the payment of thirty thousand pounds Sterling. This bargain, although highly favourable to the Morton family, it was yet in the power of government to cancel, if it should at any time be found to interfere with the interests of the inhabitants, or the improvement of the country. But these important objects were totally overlooked, when in the year 1742 the grant was

not only confirmed, but rendered absolute and irredeemable by an act of Parliament; and a charter under the Great Seal was issued in favour of his lordship to the earldom of Orkney and Zetland.*

The earl of Morton succeeded at the same time in obtaining from his sovereign a donation of the droits of admiralty, which had been considered in the islands as different from those in Scotland, and a temporary lease of the rents of the bishoprick. To understand the nature of the church property of which his lordship at this time obtained the lease, it is necessary to recollect, that by the exchange which took place between bishop Bothwell and king James VI. about the year 1614, all the detached church lands, and the tithes derived from the

* Barry's History of Orkney.

In corroboration of some of the later transactions which took place in the islands, particularly under the reigns of the Stewart family, I have availed myself of the researches of Dr Barry. He had been engaged in a similar investigation when composing his history of Orkney, and he had opportunities of consulting some unprinted documents to which I had not access.

different islands in Orkney and Zetland, were resigned to the crown in lieu of others in or near the Mainland of Orkney, and these latter, consequently, were the only property of the church, and which by this arrangement were transferred to the crown. After the abolition of episcopacy, and the establishment of the presbyterian form of church government, a much less proportion of the church funds was allotted to its ministers than had formerly been enjoyed by them. It was the unappropriated part of the exchanged lands, and teinds derived from them, of which the earl of Morton then obtained a lease.

The power and influence which the earl of Morton possessed over Orkney and Zetland were at one time very extensive. He was heritable steward, justiciary and sheriff, within the earldom, and had power to grant charters of confirmation to heritors and feuers of land to hold of the crown, for the payment of the usual feu-duty. The act for abolishing the heritable jurisdictions in Scotland, which was passed in 1747, cancelled most of these feudal preroga-

tives, for the loss of which his lordship received a pecuniary indemnification. The patronage, however, of all the kirks in Zetland, and nearly the whole of those in Orkney which had been restored in 1711 by queen Anne, was still continued, and remains in force to this day.

Having accomplished these objects, instead of redeeming the pledge which he had come under to exert himself in improving the agriculture and fisheries of the islands, his lordship thought of nothing but his personal aggrandisement. He heightened some of the payments of the rents in services and kind, and entered into a partial and arbitrary agreement with the landholders respecting the division of whales, whether great or small, and whether found dead on the shore or killed by the fishermen. The earl did not find it convenient to manage this extensive estate himself, and being frequently embroiled in disputes, he sold in 1766 every right he held, both in Orkney and Zetland, to sir Laurence Dundas, whose son and successor, the right honourable lord Dundas of Aske, at present possesses them.

The character of the Zetlanders, like that of the inhabitants of all rude countries, was long marked by ignorance and ferocity; and they appear to have subsisted chiefly by fishing and plunder. The insecurity attending the possession of landed property, under the feudal system, made them view agriculture as a matter of secondary consideration, and the ground long remained in an uncultivated state. United by no general principle of public good, and uncontrolled by the operation of equal laws, each individual joined the standard of the most successful leader, and aggrandised himself as accident gave him an opportunity, without regarding former relations or future punishment. Such seems to have been the state of society in Zetland, during the whole period that it was under the sovereignty of Norway. Many of the habits impressed by the Norwegian settlers continued to influence the manners of the Zetlanders, not only after the change in the line of the earls, but after the transference of the islands to the Scotish crown. The clause in the deed of impignoration of Orkney and Zetland to the crown of Scotland, which provided for their redemption by the Danish monarchs,

and the wish to that effect, so ardently felt and so often expressed by the kings of that country, retarded the introduction of those changes on the laws and institutions of the islands, which would have produced uniformity in their municipal regulations, and thereby more speedily conduced to assimilate people so different both in language and manners. Until after the abolition of the heritable jurisdictions, the state of Zetland was by no means favourable to the progress of agriculture or of trade, and but little calculated to develope the benevolent affections of the heart. Subjected to the caprice of arbitrary rulers, at a distance from the seat of government, and often without opportunities of preferring their complaints, or of obtaining redress, the inhabitants were constrained to endure many acts of oppression, and to submit to many infringements of their liberties. But the act of the twentieth of George II. brought them on a level with their fellow citizens in the southern parts of the empire, and their progress in civilization since that time, has not only been commensurate with their opportunities of improvement, but kept pace,

in many respects, with that of other countries more favourably situated.

The remote situation of Zetland, and its connection with Orkney, have tended materially to retard its prosperity, but in nothing has this been more conspicuous, than the effect which this union has had in hitherto excluding its inhabitants from any share in Parliamentary representation. Orkney and Zetland form one county. Orkney pays two parts of the cess, or land tax, and Zetland pays one part; yet the latter has no vote in the election of a member of Parliament. The subordinate rank which this country held relatively, in the estimation of the ancient earls, ought no longer to exist. It now forms an integral part of Great Britain, and it has a just and natural right to share in the benefits of the government which it contributes to support. The inhabitants of Zetland are extremely loyal, and they pay without a murmur every tax which is imposed on them; nor does any part of the empire, for its population, supply so many sailors to the navy. Still it is neglected, and every art which political intrigue can devise is exerted, to withhold

from its inhabitants this birthright of Britons. The gentlemen of landed property in Zetland have presented memorials to the legislature on this subject, but the representative of Orkney and his adherents have hitherto been able to prevent them from receiving their merited share of its attention. It is somewhat surprising that this should have been so long the case. Independently of the inherent justice of the claim, a small increase in the number of rational electors cannot surely diminish the chance to the minister, of bringing in his particular candidate; and from those members of the House of Commons who feel a generous interest in the fate of their fellow-subjects, such a petition ought to meet with unqualified support. The heritors of Zetland are engaged unanimously, at this moment, in making another effort to obtain possession of this natural right. If unsuccessful in their attempt, they cannot fail to deplore that pernicious inconsistency, which, while it rails at the temporary occupation of a particular place, and calls aloud for general reform, is yet insensible to the claims of equity and justice. If they succeed they will no doubt

cherish a lasting gratitude to those disinterested patriots who cancelled the influence under which they had so long groaned, and opened new and effectual channels of improvement to

——— the naked melancholy isles
Of farthest Thule.

CHAPTER III.

REMAINS OF ANTIQUITY, LANGUAGE, AND LITERATURE OF THE ZETLAND ISLANDS.

THE architectural remains of antiquity in Zetland, although numerous, are in general very imperfect. The oldest consist entirely of those edifices which are believed to have been erected by the Picts and Norwegians, and are known by the names of Burghs, Borgs, and Duns. These buildings have engaged much of the attention of antiquarians, and their form and structure have been repeatedly described. They are arranged in such a manner as to keep up a line of communication almost over the whole country. They occur in every variety of situation; on the tops of hills, though seldom on the very highest of each range; on precipitous headlands; in islands in the lakes, communicating

by a bridge with the shore, and in bays near landing places. They are of a circular form, are built of smooth flat stones without any cement, and the largest kind, which are by far the most numerous, are very commodious, and have various compartments. The smaller ones appear to have no entrance but from the top, which may have arisen, in some instances, from the demolition of their external walls. Some of these castles, as they are called, are comparatively of easy access; but others are fortified by walls, and surrounded both by wet and dry ditches of considerable extent.

The most perfect examples of these buildings still extant in Zetland, occur in the island of Mousa, and at Cullswick in the parish of Sansting. These are very large, and appear to have been constructed with great care, and resemble exactly those burghs or castles which have been generally ascribed to the Picts. The one at Cullswick stands on the projecting eminence of a high rock, and is surrounded by a deep ditch. It has been sadly dilapidated of late, to obtain stones to build a house in a neighbouring parish, which has not only im-

paired the appearance of an ancient structure, but taken away a useful land-mark to vessels approaching the coast.

From the variety of situations in which these castles are placed, the difference in their size and internal arrangement, it is probable that they served the different purposes of garrisons, watch-towers, depots, and prisons, and were erected at different periods. Those which are placed on the highest mountains are small, and appear to have been used as watch-towers. The hills on which they stand are called *Wart* or *Ward* hills. Some would, no doubt, be built by the first Scandinavians who settled in the islands, to enable them to resist the encroachments of their own countrymen, and to afford safe depots for their property against the temporary incursions of pirates; and some would be erected with similar views by the Norwegians. The castle in Mousa, we have seen, was in a state of perfect integrity about the year 1154, when it was occupied by earl Erlend, and it is probable that it was built long before that time. The present proprietor of the island has been at great pains to

preserve it entire, and it is still an interesting object. The antiquity of many may be inferred from the total absence of any building in Zetland which can be considered as cotemporary with these burghs. They could accommodate, comparatively, but a small part of the population of the country; nor have they ever been considered as the constant abodes of the inhabitants in general. There are few spots in Zetland, at present unoccupied, which appear to have been formerly enclosed; and the different clusters of houses which constitute the cottar villages, and which resemble those of the north of Scotland, afford no evidence that they were once the site of buildings of a different kind of architecture. These circumstances have led me to think, that while fortifications and places of defence were built of stone, the earlier domestic habitations were constructed of wood; and that not until its waste and gradual decay had rendered the acquisition of it difficult, had the practice become general to erect houses of more durable materials. There are some strong analogies in favour of this opinion; and these I shall take notice of in another part of this Work.

There are several stones or pillars in different parts of Zetland, consisting of a single piece, but on none are there any inscriptions which allude to the cause of their erection. They were no doubt the simple memorials of a rude age, to commemorate important transactions, or they were raised in honour of some fallen chief; but both are now alike forgotten and unknown.

In some places, too, there are imperfect traces of tumuli, the supposed tombs of the "mighty dead." The largest tumulus in the country occurs in a hill in the island of Unst, and it is called "Harold's grave," about a mile from the place which is called "Harold's-wick." We have seen that two Norwegian kings of that name visited Zetland. The first Harold, or Harold Harfagre, seems never to have been there except at the time of the conquest of the islands. When advanced in life, he went to Orkney to revenge the death of his son Halfdan; but Torfæus says, that he returned to Norway, and died soon after. Harold the Bold was a short time in Zetland, previously to his expedition against England in 1066, but he

fell in the battle of Standford. Although, therefore, the bay, as being perhaps the place where king Harold first landed, or the rendezvous of his fleet, might have received his name, it does not appear that the island had the honour of interring his royal remains. The tumulus, however, may refer to the burying-place of a prince or a chief of that name; but the vague and uncertain nature of tradition, when unsupported by any intelligible vestiges which allude to the object which it describes, although it may furnish materials for conjecture, seldom leads to the acquisition of useful knowledge.

In a very few places, particularly in the island of Unst, are concentric circles of stones near to each other, which by some are thought to have been Druidical temples of worship, and by others to be places of interment. As their occurrence is very rare, it is probable that they refer to some system of primeval religion, rather than to the sepulchres of the dead.

Triangular polished stones of green porphyry of different sizes, have been found repeatedly in

many parts of the country. I have seen them from ten to fourteen inches long, and from four to seven inches broad: the people call them thunderbolts. It is difficult to conjecture to what uses they had been applied; as they are polished, and taper to a point, they could not readily have been grasped with sufficient firmness, either to have been thrown as a dart, or wielded as a hatchet. It is possible that they might have been intended to supply the place of a breast-plate; but the uniformity of shape implies a similarity of use, whatever that might have been. Flint heads of arrows, too, have been found at different times.

There occur in Fetlar, at Neep in the parish of Nesting, and in a small island called *Kirkholm* in Sansting, and in a few other places, imperfect vestiges of camps or some species of fortification. The one in Fetlar has been considered to be the remains of a Roman camp, but this is by no means likely. I have already endeavoured to shew, that there is no just ground for a belief that the Romans ever visited Zetland. If Pytheas went thither, it was with a view to discovery. Roman vessels might

possibly have been forced there by gales of wind; but we have no accounts of such an occurrence. During the summer of the sixth year of Agricola's command in Britain, a Usipian cohort, raised in Germany, and which had been carried over to Britain, mutinied, and having killed the centurion, and some soldiers who had been incorporated with them, for the purpose of instructing them in the use of arms, they seized three galleys, and forced the pilots to put to sea. After encountering various dangers, they were at length driven on the north coast of Germany; and being looked upon as pirates, were intercepted by the Suevi and the Frisii.* It is possible that these marauders might have touched at the Zetland islands during their desultory excursion; but we can scarcely believe that they could have communicated the knowledge of arts to the inhabitants. Remains of camps, similar to those used by the Romans, might have been found in Zetland, without that circumstance necessarily implying the actual presence of the Romans in it. We know that they fought many battles in

† Tacitus.

Scotland against the Picts; and the latter would therefore have frequent opportunities of observing the Roman manner of constructing a camp. If it appeared to them to be decidedly superior to their own, they would naturally adopt it; and the improvement once practised, would soon be ingrafted on their own system of war, and would be practised in their subsequent contests with the Norwegians. In some similar manner we may account for the occurrence in Zetland of a few Roman coins. The appearance in one country of the productions of art peculiar to another, ought never to be considered, of itself, as affording proof that the country in which they are found was either possessed, or even visited, by the inhabitants of the nation to which they originally belonged. Were the contrary opinion to be generally received, it might be conjectured at some future period, that the natives of the South Sea islands occupied a great part of Britain during the eighteenth century, since every museum abounds in their instruments of war.

The ruins of Roman catholic chapels occur in almost every parish in Zetland, but few of

them are of considerable magnitude. None of them, in all probability, are older than 985, the year when Olaus Triguesson introduced Christianity into Orkney. The one at Lunna, although called a chapel, appears to have been a kind of monastery. Rectangular cells have been discovered near the foundation of it; and bones of animals, a crucible, a neat hand-mill, and several pieces of ornamental sculpture, have been dug up at different times. The largest, however, and the most entire of them, and those which had withstood the combined effects of time and fanaticism, were, one at Tingwall, and another in the island of Burra. These were small but neat buildings, and each had a steeple of hewn stone, between sixty and seventy feet high. Both have been demolished within the last fifteen years, from a principle of barbarous economy, to supply stones at a cheap rate for building the plain presbyterian churches which now occupy their places.

I have already mentioned, that the castle at Scallaway was built by earl Patrick Stewart in 1600. This village, which is still the nominal

capital of Zetland, is finely situated at the head of a small bay, sheltered from the violence of the sea by different islands, which contribute greatly to the beauty of its scenery. The ground in the immediate neighbourhood is rich and well cultivated, and forms a pleasing contrast to the hills which rise beyond it. The castle stands on a verdant piece of ground which projects into the sea, and though not on a very large scale, is in a very elegant style of architecture. There is an inscription on a stone above the gate, which is now considerably defaced, but it appears to have been completely legible in 1700, when Brand visited Zetland. The following is a copy of it :

Patricius Orchadiæ et Zetlandiæ Comes.
Cujus fundamen. saxum est, domus illa manebit;
Labilis, e contra si sit arena perit. A. D. 1600.

The account given of the origin of the latter part of this inscription, is somewhat curious. When the castle had been finished, a divine of the name of Pitcairn, minister of the parish of Northmaven, came to pay his respects to the earl. Patrick requested that he would compose a suitable motto for the front door of the

castle. The clergyman took that opportunity to expatiate on the numerous acts of oppression of which the earl had been guilty in erecting it, and he was explaining to his host the sinful nature of such conduct, when the earl, enraged at this liberty, threatened the preacher with imprisonment if he was not immediately silent. The dispute, however, having been amicably settled, Pitcairn said, "Well, if you will have a verse, I will give you one from express words of Holy Scripture;"* and he translated into Latin the substance of the forty-eighth and forty-ninth verses of the sixth chapter of St Luke's gospel, which are supposed to have an enigmatical allusion to his previous conversation with the earl. Time has had but little effect on this building, but the earl of Morton granted leave to Sir Andrew Mitchell to plunder the gateways and windows of their ornaments, in order to furnish materials to adorn the house which he erected at Sand, in the parish of Sansting; and thus set the example of that Gothic insensibility to objects of antiquity and

* Brand's Description of Zetland, p. 90.

taste, which has been so successfully followed in the same neighbourhood.

There are the remains of a similar, but less splendid edifice, at Muness, on the east side of the island of Unst. It was built in 1598, by a gentleman of the name of Laurence Bruce of Cultmalindzie in Perthshire. The following inscription appears over the gate of this castle:

> List ye to knaw this building quha began,
> Laurance the Bruce he was that worthy man,
> Quha earnestlie his ayris and affspring prayis,
> To help and not to hurt this wark alwayis.

Laurence was accompanied by a cousin of the name of Andrew Bruce, and some other gentlemen, whose voyage to Zetland appears to have been undertaken with a view to purchase land from the Norwegian udallers in that country. It is well known that Laurence went to Norway, and bought up the claims of some of the udallers, and he soon acquired a very large estate, a great part of which remained long in his family, but was at last forfeited and lost by the folly and extravagance of his successors.

From gentlemen who speculated in the purchase of landed property, chamberlains, and other civil officers of the crown, and the reformed clergy from Scotland, are descended the principal families at present in Zetland. There are but few now who can claim a Norwegian origin, and these occur exclusively among the patronymics.

Besides these castles, which are of a superior order of architecture, there are the remains of several good houses at Sumburgh in the parish of Dunrossness, where earl Robert Stewart, the father of earl Patrick, resided. The former "had also a house at Wethersta, in the parish of Delting, as appears by his feu-charter granted to Andrew Gifford of Wethersta, dated the 8th day of July 1583, wherein he reserves for his own use two or three rooms in the house of Wethersta."*

The udal or allodial tenure, which has been already alluded to, is the most ancient mode of

* Description of Zetland by Thomas Gifford, Esq. of Busta.

holding lands in Zetland, and appears to have been the principal one, while the islands remained under the sovereignty of the kings of Norway and Denmark. It is said to have been founded on an old Norwegian law of St Olave, or Olla, by which a man was obliged to divide his property, heritable as well as moveable, among all his children equally. Another account of the origin of this law states, that although the udallers divided their land among all their children, yet the portions were not equal, "the son got two merks and the daughter one; hence the *sister part*, a common proverb in Zetland to this day."* By long conformity to this law, most of the inhabitants were at one time the proprietors of the ground which they occupied. At present, although there is a considerable number of small heritors, there are, strictly speaking, few udallers, most of them having obtained written titles to their property.

The earliest written documents that are to be found on lands in Zetland, are those esta-

* Statistical Account of Aithsting and Sansting, vol. vii.

blished by what is called a *Shynd* or *Soind Bill:* Shynd implying a court, and Bill a general name for any deed or writing done in court. It consisted in transferring lands to another person, or making a particular will in favour of any one, in presence of the *Fowd*, or Judge, and three or four respectable witnesses, who, if they approved of the arrangement, testified their approbation by signature. If no such deed existed at the death of any man, the Fowd then publicly divided the property of the udaller equally among his children, according to St Olla's law.

Tingwall is the name of the parish in which at one time the chief court of Zetland was held. *Ting* implies a court of justice, and *wal* or *wald*, a fenced place.* The place where the sittings were held is still to be seen. It is on a very small island in a lake, connected with the shore by a bridge, and the site of the bench and surrounding seats can still be traced. The presiding judge was called the Fowd; he had extensive powers delegated to him by the

* Camden's Britannia, vol. ii. p. 1453.

kings of Norway and Denmark, and was a kind of governor of the country. There were under him a number of inferior fowds, or baillies, dispersed over the country. An honourable testimony to the memory of one of them, is still extant in the church-yard of Tingwall. On a grave stone in that burying place occurs the following inscription: "Here lies an honest man, Thomas Boyne, sometime Fowd of Tingwall, 1603." The power and rapacity of earl Patrick set both law and equity aside, and during his residence in Zetland, these courts or law-tings were not held, and the book of laws appears to have been destroyed. After his death, the farmers and agents of the crown revived the practice of law-tings, and restored the former system of primitive justice. The baillies resumed their functions, and several municipal regulations, called country acts, were revived for conducting the internal police of the islands. The law-tings appear to have been abolished in the time of the Commonwealth,* but the office of baillie continued to be exercised, and the acts to be acknowledged

* Barry's History of Orkney, p. 217.

long after: both, however, were finally superseded by the appointment of sheriffs. Subordinate and assistant to the baillies were a species of constables called *Rancelmen*, which still continues. They have power to command the inhabitants to keep the peace, to call for assistance, and, in cases of suspicion of theft, they enter any house, at any hour of the day or night, and search for the stolen goods, which is called *Ranceling*.

It appears from these circumstances, that Zetland had been divided into bailliwicks, or separate justice districts, before it was arranged into different parishes. The judge, on his occasional circuits, held his court at the Ting of Deal, of Aith, Sand, Lunna, &c. and hence the names of the subsequent parishes of Delting, Aithsting, Sandsting, and Lunnasting. The spot where the court was held at Neep is still to be seen, with the bench before it, and was called Neepsnating, now corrupted to Nesting.

The tradition respecting a privilege conceded to the culprit, to attempt his escape from the law-tings, even after judgment had been pro-

nounced against him, is somewhat curious. At Tingwall, for instance, it is said, that in cases of this kind the mob was arranged near to that end of the narrow bridge which connected the Ting with the shore; and the condemned person, in his endeavour to gain the church, which was but a short way off, had to force a passage through the intervening crowd. If he reached the church before being seized, it became his sanctuary, and saved him from the fury of the law; but if taken in his flight thither, he suffered the punishment awarded by the Fowd. There is a hill in the island of Unst called *Crucifeld*, which appears to have been a place of execution. In one part there is a heap of stones still called the *house* or the *seat of justice*, and several marks of crosses in the neighbourhood of it. Mr Low conjectures that this might have been part of the Fowd's circuit, and some adjoining chapel the sanctuary, whither, as was the custom at Tingwall, the malefactors endeavoured to escape.

The weights used by the people among themselves are of Norwegian origin; and, from their imperfect nature, are subject to perpetual varia-

tion. The instrument chiefly in use is called a *Bismar*. It has been well described by Dr Barry, in his History of Orkney, and I cannot do better than give the description in the Doctor's own words. "The *bysmer* is a lever or beam made of wood, about three feet long; and from one end to near the middle, it is a cylinder of about three inches diameter, thence it gently tapers to the other end, which is not above one inch in diameter. From the middle all along this smallest end, it is marked with small iron pins, at unequal distances, which serve to point out the weight, from one mark to twenty-four, or a lispund. The body to be weighed is hung by a hook in the small end of the instrument, which is then suspended horizontally by a cord around it, held in the hand of the weigher, who shifts it towards the one end or the other, till the article he is weighing equiponderates with the large end, which serves it as a counterpoise; and when they are *in equilibrio*, the pin nearest the cord points out in the marks the weight of the subject weighed."*

* Barry's History, p. 211, 212.

The Zetland orthography of this word conveys an accurate idea of the mode of pronouncing it by the inhabitants, and

As there is no accurate standard by which the bismars can be regulated, they are observed to differ considerably from each other in the different parishes, so that what is looked upon as fair weight by one man, is found often deficient by the bismar of his neighbour. The lowest unit weighed in this manner is called a mark; twenty-four marks make a lispund. A mark is equal to one pound and a quarter English; and therefore a lispund should be thirty pounds English.

The silver coins of Denmark still pass current in Zetland. Of these there is a great number, and a considerable variety, although none of them exceed the value of a shilling Sterling. The coins of Holland and the north of Germany also pass very freely among the inhabitants, but are comparatively few.

The words *Beltane* or *Belting* and *Yule*, are still retained in Zetland, the former answering to Whitsuntide, and the latter to Christmas. Indeed the words Christmas and Whit-

exactly accords, both in spelling and sound, with that given to it at present in Norway.

suntide are never mentioned by the country people, and not understood by many of them. The learned author of the "Etymological Dictionary of the Scotish language," although he has ably proved the Gothic origin of almost every remnant of antiquity in the Orkney and Zetland islands, yet seems to build something on the opinion, that the period of Beltane, as being peculiar to the Celts, is unknown to the Zetlanders, whereas the Yule-day of the Picts is familiar to them. The truth is, that both these periods are well understood, and scrupulously recognised, as well as the festival of Halloween; nor is it possible to trace the time when these names and their allusions were first introduced. This contrariety in the facts shews the uncertainty that attends all inquiries concerning the manners and customs of illiterate nations.

The ancient name of almost every place bespeaks a Scandinavian derivation, which, although now much corrupted, is still recognised by those versant in the languages of the north; and as they are understood to be eminently descriptive of the situation or the productions of

the place which they designate, they demonstrate the antiquity of the Norwegian influence in these islands.

Many names of places end in *burgh*, and they are all observed to be in the neighbourhood of a Pictish castle. Hence *Sumburgh*, *Snaburgh*, *Coningsburgh*, *Scousburgh*.

Many terminate in *seter*, which implies a dwelling, or place of resort; thus Brinnaseter, Hislanseter, corrupted from *Brindaseter*, the dwelling of Brinda, and *Hestinseter*, the resort of horses. A considerable number end in *ster* and *bister*, as *Swaraster*, *Muraster*, *Symbister*, *Fladabister*, *Kirkabister*. It is probable, however, that the names at present supposed to end in ster, are abbreviations from seter. It is true, that many of the places which at present retain the termination of seter, are such as are situated near commons, and may therefore be supposed to have been more recently cultivated; while most of the places whose names end in ster are on the sea-coast, and exhibit marks of a more ancient origin. Both, however, imply settlement or dwelling-place.

Many terminate in *ness;* as *Brimness, Hermanness, Saxaberness, Lambaness.* Ness is a name generally given to any considerable tract of land which projects into the sea.

Some names end in *wick;* as *Harold's-wick, Norwick, Braewick, Ewick. Wick* is a name given to an exposed bay.

Frequently names terminate in *land;* and the preceding part of the word expresses the situation, or the use to which the ground is applied; as *Houlland,* high land; *Truylahoulland,* the Fairies-know or hill.

The names of several places in the parish of Walls and Aithsting end in *twat;* as *Forratwat, Brounatwat, Germatwat.* The *g* is sounded hard before *e* in this last word, as in get. Twat is supposed to refer to the name of some person.

A considerable number of names of places end in *sta* and *la;* as *Busta, Incesta, Wethersta, Vaila, Foula, Moula,* &c.

Almost all the bays are denominated *voes*, and each has an epithet prefixed to it, derived either from a place on shore in its neighbourhood, or from some accidental circumstance respecting itself. Thus *Deal's voe* implies a bay near to a *daal* or valley; *Aith's voe*, a bay close to a fertile spot; *Burra voe*, a bay in the neighbourhood of a burgh or Pictish castle; *Sella voe*, a bay frequented by herrings; *Laxfrith voe*, the bay of salmon.

Some of the more high and perpendicular rocks are called *heads* or *noups;* thus, *Noss-head*, *Fitful-head;* the *Noup* of *Burrafirth*, the *Noup* of *Graveland*.

Kaim is a name generally given to a ridge of high hills.

Holm is a name generally given to a very small uninhabited island.

A *taing* is a narrow piece of land projecting into the sea, and is always bordered by a flat shore. It appears to have been derived either

from a similarity to the law-tings, or from having been actually the site of a circuit-court.

A *stack* is a high insulated rock.

A *skerrie* means a flattish rock which the sea does not overflow.

A *baa* is a rock overflown by the sea, but which may be seen at low water.

A *helyer* is a subterranean cavern into which the sea flows.

Any considerable indentation made by the sea on the more rocky parts of the coast is denominated a *goe*. To pronounce this word as is done in Zetland, we must consider it to be written *gio*, and sound the *g* hard as in give, gift.

Most of the extensive beaches on the coast are called *airs;* as *Stour-air*, *Whale-air*, *Bou-air*.

Ham or *havn* means a harbour; and of these there are several in Zetland. Many other simi-

lar names might be mentioned, but I have enumerated the most remarkable.

Several Christian names are evidently Norwegian: such are Hans, Eric, Olla, Swein; and of the other sex, Brinda, Bretta, &c. The sirname of the children is frequently formed by adding the word son or daughter to the Christian name of the father. Thus the sirname of the son of Thomas, is Thomason, and that of the daughter of Thomas, Thomasdaughter. This mode of giving names is also practised in Norway.

The ancient language of the Zetland islands, as might be inferred from the names of institutions, places of residence, and of individuals, was Scandinavian and Norwegian. What it was at the time when the Picts first settled in it, cannot now be ascertained. It was probably a dialect of the language then spoken in Scotland; but the admixture of foreign words would naturally change and new-model it. To the Picts succeeded the Norwegians; and the latter possessed an uncontrolled influence over the islands nearly six hundred years. Zetland has been uni-

ted to Scotland above three hundred years; and pure Norse or Norwegian is now unknown in it. It has long been wearing out; and the change appears to have begun in the southern extremity, and to have been gradually extended to the northern parts of the country. The island of Unst was its last abode; and not more than thirty years ago, several individuals there could speak it fluently. It was preserved, too, for a considerable length of time, in Foula; but at present there is scarcely a single person who can repeat even a few words of it.

The present language of the islands is certainly English; but good English, although well understood, is rarely spoken. I do not mean this observation to apply to the accent merely, but to the employment of words, and the construction and idiom of the English tongue. The common dialect is a mixture of Norwegian, Scotch, Dutch, and English. There are many words peculiar to Zetland, and persons versant in the phraseology of the different parishes, would find no difficulty in maintaining a conversation, which would be altogether unintelligible to an Englishman, or even to a native of

the low parts of Scotland. It would be easy to produce a vocabulary of these words, but most of them are vulgar corruptions from different languages, particularly from the Norwegian and Dutch, which the ignorance of the people prevented them from comprehending; and but a very few deserve to be considered in the light of generic appellations. The people of Zetland speak in general with an acute, and rather a harsh accent; but they lengthen the sound, and drawl out the words, when they attempt to give effect to particular emotions or sensations. This remark applies more immediately to the untutored tones of the vulgar; but more or less of it may be discovered in every speech purely Zetlandic.

The few traces of the previous existence even of the arts, in these islands, lead us to conclude, that literature was but little cultivated by their inhabitants. The clergy were almost the only set of men, who, after the revival of literature, and in the early stages of European society, engaged in study; but with the nature or extent of their acquirements in this quarter we are altogether unacquainted.

Their cotemporaries, the Icelandic Sagas, made considerable progress, both in arts and sciences. Von Troil says, that it may "be affirmed that Iceland, from the introduction of the Christian religion there, till the year 1264, when it became subject to Norway, was one of the few countries in Europe, and the only one in the north, where the sciences were cultivated and held in esteem."* Poetry seems to be the first natural effort of the mind towards cultivation, and, accordingly, most countries have produced their bards, before the language in which their poems were composed had assumed a polished form. The native Zetland poets, who, in the eleventh century, attracted the notice of St Ronald, were of this description. Their poems have been preserved, and celebrated by succeeding historians, although there is no cotemporary production in any other department of literature. Torfæus states, that to comprehend the poetry of that age, of which some specimens are still extant, one must possess an intimate acquaintance with the Norwegian language; and that it is impossible to convey an

* Von Troil's Letters on Iceland, p. 161.

adequate idea of their merits by any translation. The Norse ballads, which a few of the Zetlanders were in the habit of repeating about thirty years ago, although not generally understood, were admired for their softness of expression, and smoothness of versification. A Zetland Bloomfield composed, in English, a poem on the seasons, by no means devoid of poetical merit; but accidentally falling in with the Seasons of Thomson, he was so overwhelmed with the consciousness of his own inferiority, that he withheld the further perusal of his work, even from his particular friends.

There are but two schools in all the country, at which the rudiments of the Latin tongue are taught. One of them is at Lerwick, and the other in the distant parish of Walls. The gentlemen of landed property, and the more opulent merchants, bring tutors to their families from the southward, or they prevail on the clergy to initiate their sons in the principles of classical literature, and afterwards send them to the Universities of Aberdeen and Edinburgh. But a great part of the Zetland youth must necessarily rest satisfied with what they can

glean from a short attendance at the limited sources of instruction already mentioned. This is a radical deficiency, which cannot be too soon remedied. An academy might be established at Lerwick, where the elementary branches of general science might be taught at a moderate expence; and the more liberal minded inhabitants are loudly called upon to institute such an establishment. Nothing can compensate the neglect of early improvement of the mind, to those, who, having no patrimonial inheritance to expect, must become the architects of their own fortunes. Education to them is an invaluable gift, and the want of it, frequently unfits them for situations in life, which their integrity and their enterprize would otherwise have easily commanded.

CHAPTER IV.

OF THE DIFFERENT TENURES BY WHICH LANDS IN ZETLAND ARE RENTED OF THE PROPRIETORS, AND THE VARIOUS PAYMENTS EXIGIBLE FROM THEM.

THE enclosed land in Zetland is divided into what are called *merks* and *ures*. A merk, it is said, should contain sixteen hundred square fathoms, and an ure is the eighth part of a merk; but the merks are every where of unequal dimensions, and scarcely two are of the same size. The oldest rentals state the number of merks to be about thirteen thousand five hundred, and those of the present time make them no more. A considerable portion, however, of common, has been enclosed and cultivated since the appearance of the first rentals, although not included in them. When a part of the common

is enclosed and farmed, the enclosure is called an *outset*, but the outsets are never included in the numeration of merks of rental land. From these circumstances, it is very difficult to ascertain the actual quantity of cultivated ground in Zetland; but it is probable that six or seven thousand merks have been added to the stock since the regular rentals were made out; or, the enclosed and improved land, including in the estimate both arable and meadow ground, at present, amounts to twenty thousand merks, which is certainly not the twelfth part of the whole surface of the country.

The enclosures are made, generally, in the neighbourhood of the sea, and contain from four to seventy merks, which are frequently the property of different heritors, and are always subdivided among several tenants. Such a place is called a *town* or a *room*, and each has a particular name.

The uncultivated ground, outside of the enclosure, is called the *Scatthold*, and is used for general pasture, and to furnish turf for firing. Every tenant may rear as many sheep, cattle,

or horses, on the general scatthold attached to the town in which his farm lies, as he can. There is no restriction on this head, whether he rent a large or a small farm. If there be no moss in the scatthold contiguous to his farm, the tenant must pay for the privilege to cut peat in some other common, and this payment is called *hogalif*.* It seldom exceeds three shillings per annum.

The kelp shores, and the pasture islands, are seldom or never let to the tenant along with the land: these, the landholder retains in his own hands. In some parts of Zetland, particularly in the island of Unst, the proprietor furnishes the tenant, gratis, with a house, barn, and stable, which he also keeps in a state of repair. In other parts of the country, this expence is divided between them, but the chief proportion of it always falls on the landholder.

The quantity of land farmed by a tenant varies from three to twelve merks, and some-

* *Hogan* or *Huaga* is a name given to a scatthold or pasture ground.

times more; but the average number to each, may be taken at five. In a few instances, regular leases are granted, and some of them for a great number of years; but these are comparatively rare. In the great majority of cases, nothing more takes place than a verbal agreement, on the part of the tenant, to occupy a farm under certain conditions, for one year only; at the expiration of which, both he and the landholder consider themselves at perfect liberty to enter on a new engagement. The *steelbow* tack, which consists in delivering over to the tenant a certain number of live stock, generally of different kinds, which he is bound to restore when he leaves the land, is seldom practised in Zetland, and granted only to individuals who are otherwise in respectable circumstances.

The rents are paid in cash and various articles of country produce, such as fish, butter, oil, &c. and the amount of the rent varies, according as the tenant has the exclusive disposal of his labour, or agrees to fish to his landholder. In the former case, the probable profits on the sale of fish, and the other articles

of produce, are estimated, and the lands are let at their full value. In the latter case, or where the tenant fishes to the landholder, he comes under an agreement to deliver to him his fish, butter and oil, at a certain price, and then the lands are let at a considerably reduced rate. This system, where there is a reciprocity of profit between the landholder and the tenant, is by far the most general, and the practice is immemorial in Zetland.

The merks are divided into different classes, such as *six-penny*, *nine-penny*, and *twelve-penny* merks. These are arbitrary numbers, employed to designate certain differences in the rents of the merks, according to their size and produce. Thus nine-penny merks should be more valuable than six-penny merks, and twelve-penny more so than nine-penny. But these distinctions, although founded no doubt, originally, on real differences, are at present very inaccurate measures of the relative value of the different classes of merks, for it sometimes happens, that a six-penny merk is as large and productive as a twelve-penny one.

The land rent, although generally made up from a variety of sources, has been always understood, on letting the lease, to be paid in coarse cloth and butter, or butter and money. For a long time it was paid in a species of cloth called *wadmill** and butter, but the wadmill having been converted into cash, the rents are now paid in butter and money. It was at one time the practice, on letting the crown-lands, to demand of the tenant a grassum, or premium, of two shillings for each merk, on his entering on the farm, and to grant him a lease for three years, if he chose, with the advantage of one year's credit for the rent in every case. But the tenant failing often to pay the grassum on his entry, it became an annual payment of eight shillings Scots on each merk of land, of whatever class or description. The crown lands are now rented to tacksmen, like the other, and the sub-tenants have only an annual lease, with the supposed advantage of a year's credit; but which is often a source of serious inconvenience to them.

* *Wadmal* is the name given to coarse cloth in Iceland, and it forms a considerable article of exchange among the inhabitants of that country.—Von Troil's Letters on Iceland.

The rates of rent of the different classes of merks, are in the proportion which the numbers which designate them bear to each other. The butter is estimated according to marks and lispunds, and the cash is reckoned in money Scots. I have already mentioned, that there are twenty-four marks, or thirty pounds English, in a lispund. To ascertain the simple rent of a merk of land, according to the penny rates, it is necessary to observe the following formula: Multiply 1 and $\frac{1}{3}$ by the number of pennies by which the merk is denominated, and the product is the number of marks of butter which it pays, and also the number of shillings Scots. To this add eight shillings Scots, of grassum, for each merk, and the total will be the amount of the rent of each merk in butter and money. Then if we average the lispund of butter at ten shillings Sterling, the whole can easily be reduced to money Sterling.

The following table will illustrate this, money Scots being the twelfth part of money Sterling:

Class and rate of merks.	Rent in butter and money Scots.		Grassum.	Rent of each merk in Sterling money.
	Merks of butter.	Shillings Scots.		
A six-penny merk of land, or $1\frac{1}{3}\times6$, =	8	8	8	0 4 8
A nine-penny merk, or $9\frac{1}{3}\times6$, =	12	12	8	0 6 8
A twelve-penny merk, or $12\frac{1}{3}\times12$, =	16	16	8	0 8 8*

Besides butter and money, there are other payments to the landholder, of which it is not easy to ascertain the actual value. The tenant engages to work three days in the year to him, at such periods as he shall point out. In the parish of Sansting the tenant works six days. When, from distance, or other unavoidable circumstances, he is unable personally to perform the labour, the landholder charges him at the

* There are a few merks rated as low as four, and some as high as twenty-four pennies; but as they occur seldom, I have not thought it necessary to give them a separate column. The rents, however, may be ascertained in the same manner as the others.

rate of sixpence for each day that he is absent. In the parish of Sansting it is as high as tenpence. In general the point is settled between them when the land is taken. On the Mainland there is an exaction of a fowl for every merk of land; but the islands are exempted from this payment.

Such is the manner in which lands are held, and the rents paid, according to the ancient system of the *penny* lands, where the landholder is supposed to be indemnified for the comparative low rent which he receives for his land, by the profits which he derives from the sale of the produce of the tenant's industry.

Were the tenant, however, to rent the land exclusively on his own account, the amount of the rent would be more than double what it is at present; and, taking every thing into consideration, the merks would be rented nearly in the following proportion:

A merk of six-penny land, at -	£.	0	10	0
ditto nine-penny - -		0	15	0
ditto twelve-penny, - -		1	0	0

When the lands are held in this manner, the tenant is altogether independent of his landholder, and he may dispose of the produce of his industry wherever he chooses; but his lease, as in the former case, lasts but for a year. The practice of letting land in this manner, however, is necessarily restricted to certain parts of the country, for reasons which shall be afterwards explained.

There is a third variety, which is a combination of the former two, less advantageous to the tenant than either of the others: where the land is high rented, and the tenant obliged, notwithstanding, to fish to the landholder, and, in some instances, to sell to him the fish which he may catch and cure, after paying the rent of the land, at comparatively a low price. This kind of management occurs occasionally in every parish, but operates chiefly in Tingwall, Weesdale, Aithsting, Sansting, and part of Dunrossness. The tenant, in this case, has not the reciprocal benefit derived from the moderate rent by the *penny* rate, nor the satisfaction of independent exertion; but is subjected to a

variety of exactions, to discharge which neither industry nor zeal are at all times sufficient.

For a long time all the land in Zetland was not only rented, but sold according to rentals made from the penny rates; and it is not yet more than twenty years since innovations on this mode of valuing them became general. It began about the year 1791, when the estate of the late Sir John Mitchell was sold by public auction. There were many individuals, at that time, anxious to possess particular spots of ground, which lay contiguous to their property; and thus, several portions of Sir John's estate sold above their value, and the whole land was considered as high priced. Hence the purchasers were under the necessity of raising the rents, and as the estate was large, and the lands lay in several different parishes, the practice of raising them soon became generally recognised, and an increase on the rents has since that time been progressive. The great rise of late, too, in the price of many articles imported into Zetland, and the consequent depreciation in the value of money, have no doubt contributed much in producing these changes; but

the rents have often been increased in an arbitrary manner, from erroneous notions of the first principles of political economy.

The price of land in Zetland varies very much in the different parishes, and in different parts of the same parish, according to the fertility of the soil, the situation of the farm for pasture, fishing, or the sale of its produce, and the number or paucity of payments exigible from it. In 1600 earl Patrick sold land at thirty shillings Sterling per merk, which was "full lands price at that time." About 1765 land sold in Unst at £. 2. and £. 2. 10s. per merk; and about 1770, £. 5. was deemed a fair price. In 1789 three merks of land lying in the midst of hills were sold to a tenant for one hundred pounds Sterling and forty sheep, or about forty pounds for each merk. This man had a large flock of sheep, long accustomed to a particular pasture, and, rather than remove them, he paid this enormous price for his farm. In 1791 some of the land of Sir John Mitchell's estate sold at £. 30. per merk, but the average amount of the whole did not exceed £. 10. per merk.

In 1800 several hundred merks were sold at a time in Unst and North Yell, and the average price of each was not above £. 8. 10s. In the parish of Tingwall land sold last year at £. 30. and some in Dunrossness as low as £. 5. 10s. per merk. This latter was burdened with many public payments. Upon the whole, the average price of land in Zetland may be taken at £. 12. per merk, which would be considered at twenty or twenty-five years purchase.

But the landholder is not the only claimant on the lands and the industry of the tenant; the donee of the crown rents, the clergyman, and the public, have also a share.

I have already stated, that in 1742 the crown rights over Orkney and Zetland were disposed, by an irredeemable grant, to the earls of Morton, who had, on a former occasion, possessed a temporary influence over them, and that they were retained in the Morton family until 1766, when they were sold to sir Laurence Dundas, whose successor, the present lord Dundas, of Aske, now enjoys them.

The most general payment to his lordship is denominated *Scatt*, derived from *scatthold*, and was the ancient Danish land-tax. It is paid in cash, butter, and oil, and is levied on every merk of rental land, without exception; but the *outsets* are exempted from this payment. Nothing can be more unequal and partial in its operation than this tax. It bears little or no relation to the present situation or value of the lands, and has been imposed originally without any prospective view to the future state of the country. Thus, six-penny land, in some places, pays as high as 10d. of scatt, while nine-penny land, lying perhaps within the same dyke, does not exceed 6d. per merk. Nor is there more discrimination displayed in the appreciation of the kind of produce demanded from the lands; for some farms, at a distance from the sea, pay a greater proportion of oil than butter, while others favourably situated for fishing, pay chiefly in butter. The amount of the scatt varies from 3d. to 1s. 2d. per merk.

There is a payment to Lord Dundas called *Walle-rent* or *Wattle*, also of Norwegian origin. There are various traditions respecting it, the

most probable of which is the following. During the predominance of the Roman catholic religion, the bishop of Orkney and Zetland sent over a matron to Zetland, whom he recommended to the people as a person of such uncommon sanctity, that if she were hospitably entertained in any parish, even for a single night, and afterwards received a small annual contribution for her support, the inhabitants of it would for ever after be blessed with abundance. The superstitious people listened to the admonition of their spiritual guide; the lady travelled through the country, and received her gratuity. The earls finding that it had been considered as a regular payment, introduced it into their rentals, and it is paid at the present time. It amounts, on an average, to one penny per merk.

I have mentioned, in the general history, the time when it took place, and the circumstances which gave rise to the imposition of the *sheep* and *ox* penny,—this payment may also be taken, on an average, at one penny per merk.

Besides the scatt, walle-rent, and the sheep and ox penny, which are all paid by the tenants who rent the land, there are feu-duties on them, payable also to lord Dundas, by the heritors themselves, whether the land be tenanted or not. The amount of the feu-duty is the whole of the butter, and half of the money which any particular class of merk pays, and leaves little to the landholder but the grassum. In some estates the feus are numerous, and necessarily constitute a very material deduction from the profit of the landholder, who, on setting such land to his tenants, rarely imposes any additional rent on this account. Lord Dundas is himself a considerable proprietor in Zetland, and his land is called property-land, in opposition to that from which he only receives a feu-duty. The number of feued merks amounts nearly to two thousand.

These different payments are frequently comprehended under the general name of *superiorities*, although the feu-duties, as implying that the lands are held of a superior, are alone entitled to the appellation.

The teinds are divided into corn teind and casual teind.

The corn teind, if paid in kind, is every tenth sheaf, but this is rarely practised. The corn teind, when commuted, is paid in butter and oil, in the proportion of about three-fourths of a *can* * or gallon of oil, and from three to four marks of butter, per merk of land; and wherever this conversion has taken place, the lands, although not tenanted, are attachable for the amount. The corn teind is divided between the minister and the proprietor of the crown rents, and the share of the latter is denominated *umbith* or *umboth* duty. This word is also of Norwegian origin, and is said to imply a going or changing about; and the following is the tradition respecting it. When the bishop received the one-half of the tithes, and the parson the other, the former, apprehensive that as the parson was constantly on the spot he might appropriate to himself the best half of the tithes, directed that they should change shares alter-

* *Kanne* is the Norwegian name of a measure, which answers to three quarts English.

nately, and what fell to the bishop one year, should become the share of the parson the following one. The parishes of Tingwall, Whiteness, Wesdale, and a few adjacent islands, pay no umbith duty; they constituted an archdeaconry, and the archdeacon collected the teinds exigible from them himself.*

The casual or vicarage teinds are derived from cattle, sheep, wool, fish, and oil. For every milch cow the tenant pays from two to four marks of butter. For every thirty sheep he pays one, and three marks of wool, and at the rate of one penny or twopence a-head, for every one under thirty. Every six-oared boat which goes to the ling fishing in summer, pays teind in fish or in oil, in the proportion of from ten to sixteen ling, or three cans of oil. The casual teinds are very precarious, and the sheep and wool teind have, of late, dwindled almost into nothing. The minister has also three days

* The lands in Zetland which formerly belonged to the bishop, and which were transferred to the crown at the time of the exchange already mentioned, are also called umboth lands. It is from the umboth, called sometimes free-teinds, that the augmentations to the clergy are chiefly derived.

labour in the year from each family, at such periods as he chooses to demand it.

There is an exaction of a hen from every house or *reek*, under the denomination of *hawk-hen*, which was at one time a regular payment in kind to the king's falconer, and afterwards given in lease to different individuals. It has been falling into disuse for several years, and it ought to be abolished as an unnecessary and oppressive imposition.

Superadded to all these permanent claims, the tenants pay their share of public burdens. The cess, or British land-tax, is levied equally on every merk of rental land, with the exception of such as belong to lord Dundas. It is, however, never collected separately, but is always confounded with the casual impositions of the current year, laid on by the commissioners of supply. These commissioners are several of the principal heritors, qualified by the possession of a certain income derived from landed property, and are appointed by Government to regulate the imposition, and superintend the expenditure of these casual taxes on the coun-

try. The real land-tax or cess is about 3½d. per merk, but it is difficult to appreciate the amount of casualties. They proceed from different sources, such as a premium on eagles, ravens, and crows heads, bounties to seamen, rogue money, &c. Upon the whole, the aggregate amount of these casualties may be estimated at the rate of 2½d. per merk, making a total of 6d. per merk. Since it became the practice to collect the land-tax, and the casual impositions of the current year, under the general name of cess, the total has been divided between the heritor and the tenant, of which each pays a half.

The salary to the parish schoolmaster is another public burden, of which the tenant has to pay his proportion. The amount of the sum necessarily varies in the different parishes, according to the greater or less number of merks in the parish; but a general average over the whole country may be taken at 2d. for each merk of land payable by the tenant.

Such are the different modes in which lands are rented in Zetland, and such are the various

kinds and proportions of payments exigible from them. It appears, that if his lands are tenanted, the proprietor pays no fixed part of the general burdens on them, except the half of the cess and school-money, and the feu-duties, if there happen to be any on his estate. All the rest are paid by the tenant, and we should form but an imperfect idea of the claims on the produce of his industry, if we considered merely the amount of his land-rent. But it is almost impossible to state the particular items, and to present at once a view of the different payments from a merk of land, that would apply to the different parishes, and be a fair average of the whole; for frequently, in the very same town, there occur instances of the different tenures; the commutations which are common in one parish, are not practised in the very next one; and the same articles of produce vary in their price to the landholder, the superior, and the minister.

CHAPTER V.

OF THE STATE OF AGRICULTURE IN THE ZETLAND ISLANDS; OF SOME IMPROVEMENTS OF WHICH IT APPEARS SUSCEPTIBLE; AND SOME OBSERVATIONS ON SHEEP FARMING.

AGRICULTURE appears never to have been an object of general attention in Zetland. The cultivated land bears but a very small proportion to the undivided common, nor are there any facts from which it can be inferred, that the arable land, at any former period, ever equalled its present amount. In 1614, when Mr Mackaile visited Orkney, it was the practice to export large quantities of grain every year from thence to Zetland, "in which islands there groweth not so much every year as would maintain the inhabitants three months."*

* Manuscript account of the most considerable things in Orkney. Barry, p. 448.

There has been, however, a very considerable increase in the quantity of arable land since that time.

Section I.

Of the Mode in which Agriculture is conducted at present in the Zetland Islands.

The soil is various, but the most abundant kind of it is moss; which in many places is above twenty feet deep. There is a considerable proportion of sandy ground in the parishes of Dunrossness and Sandness, and in the islands of Noss, Fetlar, and Unst. In Tingwall, Whiteness, and the islands of Burra, there is a good deal of rich black mould. Clay occasionally occurs in some districts; and there are few parishes which do not possess more or less of all these different kinds of soil.

The lands in the different towns generally lie *pro indiviso*, intimately mingled together; which not only creates frequent disputes, but

prevents the more industrious tenants from making smaller enclosures.

The chief implements of agriculture are, the spade, the plough, and the harrow. The spade is light, longer in the shaft, and much narrower in the iron part than the garden spade. Three or four people work together with such spades, and turn up a great deal of ground in the course of a day. This instrument is well adapted for rugged and hilly ground, and by many it is employed for the cultivation of the whole farm. The following description of the genuine Zetland plough, to which there are generally attached four oxen, who go a-breast, and the mode of using it, given by the Rev. Mr Barclay, is so circumstantial and accurate, that I shall state it in his own words. "A large yoke is laid on the necks of the two outermost, and a small yoke on the innermost oxen. These yokes are joined by a double rope, to the middle of which is fixed the draught or chain, which is from twenty-four to eighteen feet long, from the neck of the oxen to the nose of the plough. The plough is of a very singular construction; a crooked piece of wood

bent (naturally) almost to a right angle, forms the beam; to which is fixed a piece of oak stave, about seven feet long, which must be very pliable, and yield to the pressure of the driver's hand when he would deepen his fur. The coulter stands almost even up and down, and is always too short. A square hole is cut through the lower end of the beam, and the *mercal*, a piece of oak about twenty-two inches long, introduced, which at the other end holds the sock and sky. The furrow is made deep or shallow, by driving a wedge below or above the *mercal*, on the outside of the beam. There is a stilt on the top of the plough; and the man who holds it walks on the white land at the side of it. This slender machine is liable to many accidents. A stone in the land, or even a stiff furrow, often breaks it in pieces, and the labour is much retarded; it turns the furrow almost quite round about; and people are employed to cut and smooth it with spades, before the seed is sown."*

Several gentlemen who have turned their attention to farming, employ a better kind of

* Statistical Account of Aithsting and Sansting, vol. vii.

plough than the one now described; but few of the peasantry know of any other.

The ground is divided into what is called *outfield* and *infield*. The outfield is the land which has been last brought into a state of cultivation, and in most parts the soil is mossy. It is sown generally with oats. The infield, on the contrary, has been long in a state of culture, and it produces barley, called in Zetland *bear*, and potatoes. The outfield is seldom well drained, although it might be easily done without any additional trouble or expence. Thus, when cutting peat for fuel, which is often done within the dyke, instead of doing this in parallel lines, leaving a considerable space between them to become a future corn field, the people cut in every direction, disfigure the ground, and very often form reservoirs for water to accumulate in. The outfield is allowed to remain fallow for one, and sometimes two years in succession, but the infield is generally turned over every year.

In many parts of Zetland the people do not begin to sow oats till the middle of April, nor

the bear until the beginning of May. In the parishes of Tingwall and Whiteness they are much earlier, frequently commencing about the middle of February; and in ordinary good seasons they cut down their crops also much earlier. When the weather, however, is favourable for vegetation, during spring and summer, the difference between the ripening of the late and the early seed is by no means great.

The mode of preparing manure varies in the different parishes. In the island of Unst it is formed in the *byres* where the cattle are sheltered. The people first lay a stratum of heath along the floor of the byre; as soon as the daily accumulating dung renders the surface wet, they introduce a fresh stratum of heath or dry earth, and so on, successively, until the cattle can hardly find entrance between the floor and the roof. This forms a rich manure, but the practice is unfavourable for the health of the cattle. In several parishes the farmers content themselves with the simple dung of the cattle, aided by a little mould, and now and then sea-weed; and seldom make the most of the little manure which they prepare. Instead of spreading it on

the field before the ground is turned over, and incorporating it by the spade or the plough with the soil, it is frequently scattered on the ground after the seed has been sown, and thus contributes but little, either to the growth of the grain or the improvement of the land. In other parts of Zetland, particularly in the islands of Fetlar and Burra, and the parishes of Tingwall, Whiteness, and Dunrossness, the farmers are extremely industrious in forming composts of every material which, by admixture and decomposition, can be converted into manure. With this view they mix clay, turf, mould, dung and sea-weed together; and they practise this during the whole year, so that they have at all times an abundant supply of this necessary auxiliary to agriculture.

The richest and most fertile parish in the country is Dunrossness. It is not only able to supply itself with oats, barley and potatoes, but, in general, to send considerable quantities of these articles to less fruitful districts. The sand, however, has in some parts of it made great encroachments on the arable land, and has, within a period of fifty years, obliterated

several hundred acres of a verdant plain. The remains of the villages are still to be seen, and they present a striking picture of sterile desolation. This destructive process still operates; and every succeeding year exhibits fresh proofs of its agency. The beach and the sand-hills from which the loose sand proceeds, is of considerable extent, and the heavy gales of south-west wind, which prevail in winter, tear it up and blow it over the adjoining fields. But the extent of its progress is greatly aided by the form of the ground which borders the beach. The sand having gradually fallen away, has left in many places a precipitous bank towards the sea. When the wind therefore raises the loose sand from the beach, it forces it with violence against this bank, which, resisting its progress, increases its elevation in the air, and it is thus necessarily projected a much greater distance by the wind, than it could otherwise have been carried. By sloping the ground towards the sea, filling up vacuities, and sowing some hardy plants, I am convinced that this destroying power might be much abridged, and many valuable acres of ground recovered. The Rev. Mr Mill, late minister of this parish, divided Dun-

rossness into *Arabia Petræa*, *Felix*, and *Deserta*; which, with the salvo of *parva componere magnis*, although somewhat whimsical, was by no means an unhappy allusion.

When the seed has been sown, the people begin to repair the dykes, and to cut peat for firing. The dyke which encloses the *town* is built either of stone or turf, and often of both, but so imperfectly constructed, that a great part of it is thrown down every year. Indeed, as soon as the crop is in the yard, the town is intentionally exposed to the incursions of sheep, horses, and swine, which at other times pasture on the hills.

The cutting or *casting* peats, as it is called, is an important operation, for, with the exception of some coal imported by the gentry, this is the only species of fuel used in the country. The first step in the process is, to remove six or eight inches of the external vegetating moss, denominated the *feal;* which operation is termed *flaying the muir*, and is practised in the following manner: Two parallel lines, of any length, are cut by a sharp spade, six inches

deep, leaving a space of about two feet between them. In the case where a bank had been formerly cut, one line only is necessary, the edge of the bank forming the other. After the first piece of turf has been taken off, and the depth of the feal determined on, two men, each with a spade, proceed to remove a layer along the whole space which the lines include, and, while one of them digs on the surface, the other disengages the turf from its adhesion below. After the muir has been thus prepared, the peats are cut with an instrument called a *tuysker*, which resembles a narrow spade, having a sharp plate of iron, called the feather, about seven inches long, projecting from the bottom on its left hand side, and it determines the form and size of the peat. Each peat, when newly cut, is about fourteen inches long, seven broad, and two and a half thick. As the peats are cut they are laid on the left side of the line in a regular order, and the successive strata are arranged in such a manner above the first one, as to leave interstiees for the admission of air to favour the drying of the whole. It sometimes happens that a man cuts peats three deep downwards; and it is surprising to see with

what dexterity and ease he throws each peat into its proper place, although the highest is sometimes on a level with his head. If the muir has been properly prepared, nine or ten men can easily cast as many peats in one day as can supply the consumption of a single fire for a whole year. After the peats have remained a fortnight or three weeks in the situation in which they were first laid, they are set up on end, in small parcels, and this is called *raising* the peats. This operation is sometimes repeated, and when the peats are completely dry, they are either built up in stacks on the hill, or conveyed to the house on horses; and those who are at a distance from the hill find this a tedious and expensive process. Peats, when well dried, give out a great deal of heat, and burn with a bright flame.

The casting of peats long constituted a species of festival all over Zetland. Thirty or forty men were invited to cut peats on a certain day, and they were sumptuously entertained for their trouble; and this the same party performed to different individuals in the same season. This practice is still continued in a few places.

If the feal which had been taken off be carefully laid down in the bottom of the ditch, with its green side uppermost, it is observed to yield uniformly a better kind of grass than it did before its removal; but the people, although well aware of this fact, seldom pay any attention to it; and not only cut the moss in every direction, but huddle the feals together in heaps, and thus prevent the regular regeneration of turf, and the improvement of the pasture.

The want of small light carts is a serious inconvenience in conducting several of the details of husbandry in Zetland, as every thing must be carried by the people themselves, or conveyed on horses. In many places the ground is so rugged and unequal, and in others the moss is so deep, that the use of carts would be impracticable, but in several districts carts would form a valuable auxiliary to the other means of transport.

The mode of managing the crop, when it has been produced, is but ill calculated to render it productive. The farmers begin to cut down

the grass about the middle of August, although it is ready often long before; but however favourable the weather may be for drying the hay, they never can be prevailed on to build it in stacks until it has first *taken heat*, to prevent that process from occurring in the stack. By this means it is repeatedly exposed to the influence of rain, its nutritious principle is literally bleached out, and being at last but imperfectly dried, a species of putrescent fermentation not unfrequently comes on, and renders it unfit for the use of cattle.

In ordinary seasons the crop is in a state to be reaped about the middle of September, but it sometimes happens that it is not in the yards before the middle or end of November. In general, however, this is accomplished by the end of October. But the same passive indolence and procrastination take place in cutting down the corn as in building up the hay. When a field of corn is ripe, and the weather fine, instead of availing themselves of that fortunate coincidence to cut it down, the farmers content themselves with cutting now and then a small portion of it, and spend the rest of the

day in unprofitable fishing. Heavy falls of rain and gales of wind come suddenly on, and often destroy the remainder; and no previous experience can overcome rooted prejudice, or demonstrate the necessity of more watchful conduct.

The water-mills employed in Zetland for grinding the corn are simple, and I believe peculiar. "They are without wheels. A round piece of wood, about four feet in length, and fitted with twelve small boards, in the same manner as the extremity of the exterior wheel of an ordinary mill, with a strong iron spindle fixed to its upper end, supplies the place of a wheel in these mills. The iron spindle, passing through the under mill-stone, is fixed in the upper.' A pivot in the under end of the *tirl*, (the piece of wood above-mentioned) runs in a hollowed iron plate. The water falls upon the *awes* or feathers of the *tirl*, at an inclination of between forty and forty-five degrees. The mill-stones are commonly from thirty to thirty six inches in diameter. The tirl occupies the same situation under this mill, as the trundles in the inner part of an ordinary mill; and it performs

the same office. The diameter of the tirl is always equal to that of the mill-stone."* When the frost is so intense as to prevent the water from running from the lake or reservoir, and, consequently, when the public mill cannot be wrought, the people substitute a small *hand-mill*, with which almost every family is provided. It consists of two circular smooth stones, about eighteen inches diameter, connected together at the centre, where there is an opening at which the corn is introduced. The under stone is fixed to a table, and the upper one is turned round on it by the hand of a person. The grain is ground in a very imperfect manner by this machine, and but in small quantities. There are no wind-mills in this country.

The gardens in Zetland produce in abundance almost every variety of culinary vegetable, of delicious taste and flavour. Indeed, I think the esculent roots in that country superior to those which I have met with any where else. The fruits produced, are neither very various nor very abundant. Different

* Statistical Account of Unst, vol. v.

kinds of berries grow in considerable quantity, and, in a few gardens, apples and other kinds of wall-fruit.

Section II.

Of some Improvements on the Zetland system of Agriculture.

Although I am persuaded that the state of agriculture in Zetland may be so improved as to conduce greatly to the comfort and happiness of the poorer inhabitants, yet the unsettled and tempestuous nature of the climate present, I am afraid, insuperable obstacles to it ever becoming an object of undivided pursuit by any one. The early part of autumn is the period most to be dreaded; nor can its destructive effects be anticipated by an early seed-time; for the heavy rains and keen frosts, which often occur in the months of February and March, render tillage impracticable. On the 9th of September 1807, a great part of Zetland was covered with snow several feet

deep. The crop was not yet cut down; and fields, which but the day before appeared in all the luxuriance of autumn, now presented one trackless waste.

> Sternuntur segetes et deplorata coloni
> Vota jacent; longique labor perit irritus anni.

It is reckoned a very favourable year, when by the help of fishing, and other means, no meal is imported; nor, in the most productive seasons, could the crop alone subsist the inhabitants more than five or six months in the year. It has frequently happened that the crop has failed totally, and the ravages of famine been averted by the bounty of Government, after the value of nearly the whole annual exports of the country had been consumed in the purchase of provisions. The grain, meal, and bread, imported into Zetland in 1803, amounted to £. 30,000. a sum greatly exceeding the price of all the fish caught that year, and nearly equal to the amount of all the exports. Events of this kind are unfortunately of but too frequent occurrence, and seldom indeed do two favourable seasons come in succession. Under such circumstances, agricul-

tural skill is of no avail, and a simple cultivator of the ground would be overwhelmed in bankruptcy.

Yet, notwithstanding these natural obstacles to the perfection of agriculture in Zetland, much might be done towards its amelioration, by the removal of some impediments which clog its operations, and by a more intelligent application of the resources within itself.

Among the most obvious causes which retard the advancement of agriculture in the Zetland islands, is the almost universal prosecution of the ling fishing, by the very farmers themselves. Before fishing became the object of such general pursuit, the farms were larger and better attended to than at present. By splitting them into small sub-divisions, to increase the number of fishers, the quantity of land actually cultivated by any one farmer, is really so inconsiderable, that an abundant crop is not to be expected from it under any circumstances, nor can it furnish the means of subsistence to keep pace with the increasing population which this system encou-

rages. In summer, the tenant is engaged in fishing to his landlord; in autumn, he is occupied in preserving his crop; in winter, every fair day is spent in procuring fish for the support of his family; and, in spring, he turns over the portion of ground which he cultivated the former year. He can devote but little time himself to agricultural occupations, either in spring or in summer, the periods of the year most favourable to improvement; and he is unable to pay others to do so for him. Hence the same spots of ground are turned over and over, every successive year; the soil is impoverished, and no new land is added to the former stock.

The indiscriminate prosecution of the fishing is connected with another impediment to the progress of agriculture, and is in some degree the cause of it, namely, the practice of letting the farms only for the term of one year. The person who rents a farm but for one year, cannot be expected to trouble himself much about its improvement. He is always at the mercy of the landholder or tacksman, and is subjected to the jealousy of lazy and envious neighbours.

It is not uncommon in Zetland, that when one tenant, by active industry, has improved his farm very considerably, another shall state to the proprietor, that his neighbour's farm contains better land, and is more productive than his own, although the rent of both is the same, and that he would gladly pay an increase of rent to obtain it. The proprietor or tacksman has it not always in his power personally to examine into the merits of the case, and it is perhaps but natural to listen to what tends to augment his income; the consequence is, that the industrious tenant must either pay more for his farm, or resign it to his neighbour. Such occurrences sour the temper, and excite disgust in the mind of the tenant at any thing like improvement, and if he can therefore extract from his farm the bare means of subsistence, he thinks of no more. It is in vain to urge, that it is not the interest either of a landholder or a tacksman to remove an active and an enterprizing tenant, and that therefore he may exert himself, in the assurance of reaping himself the fruit of his labour. This is no doubt true in the main, but the tenant has no satisfactory proof that this will really be the

case; and instances to the contrary have come within his knowledge. The power of voluntary removal, incessantly suspended over his head, cannot fail to repress his habits of industry, and keep his mind in a state of dependence. In those parts of Zetland where individuals have long leases, the ground is comparatively well cultivated, and they are independent.

The undivided state of the commons must be considered as one of the causes which tend to retard the progress of enclosing, and, consequently, of cultivating new ground. When a number of heritors have property in any particular district, it is very difficult to obtain their consent, either to permit an individual to enclose ground on his own account, or to agree among themselves and obtain a division of the scatthold. When a landholder is either the sole or the chief proprietor, he is generally anxious to encourage the enclosing and cultivating of ground, and is at all times disposed to give those who are willing to engage in it, very favourable leases during their

own life-time. But beyond some detached spots within the enclosure, few of these agriculturists have been able to proceed. It is generally young men, soon after marriage, who engage in these schemes. For the first two or three years, when the land is new, and they are unincumbered with the cares of a family, they succeed in raising several tolerable crops of oats ; but when their wives are unable to assist in the more active details of the farm, there is then an end to further improvement. While, however, they remain under the protecting care of the landholder who first encouraged the plan, their wants are supplied, and his liberality makes up for their deficient exertion. But if they should happen to be transferred to a tacksman, which is sometimes the case, they then learn by experience, that if they cannot work for themselves, no other will do it for them. The result of the whole frequently is, that the tenant either abandons his farm or is involved in debt, and as a successor is seldom to be found, the improvement of the ground is confined to a beneficial change in the kind of grass which it yields.

These are all serious obstacles to permanent improvements in agriculture in the Zetland islands. The two first, namely, the almost exclusive attention bestowed on fishing, and the practice of restricting the lease, in general, to one year only, must in this place be received as facts, the operation of which tends to retard the cultivation of land. But the appreciation of the relative influence of each, and the investigation of the reciprocal advantages and disadvantages resulting to the parties concerned in this arrangement, must necessarily be deferred, until, having stated some circumstances respecting the fisheries, we proceed to enter on an examination of the nature of the connection which subsists between the Zetland landholders and their tenants. An enumeration, however, of some of the more obvious improvements on the Zetland system of agriculture, may be conveniently introduced in this place.

Enclosures, and clearing the ground of weeds. —The first step towards any useful improvement on the agriculture of Zetland, must be, to enclose the farm by a dyke, which shall be able to exclude every species of cattle, dur-

ing winter as well as in summer; yet, until the practice become general to grant leases for a number of years, this necessary preliminary can scarcely be expected to take place. Where a single individual possesses the whole of the ground in any particular enclosure, a dyke of any description may be easily erected, even in the present state of things; but where it is divided among a number of heritors, whose tenants rent their farms by different tenures, it would be very difficult to carry it into practice. Those tenants who had leases would consider it their interest to keep their portion of the dyke in a state of good repair, but the fluctuating vassal of a season cannot be expected to engage heartily in any conjoined effort, the immediate benefit of which might perhaps be enjoyed by another.

There are few situations where farmers can obtain, at an easier rate, the materials for building dykes than in Zetland; for, with a very few exceptions, turf or stones abound in the neighbourhood of all the enclosures. To surround the dyke by a ditch of two or three feet wide, would not only be opposing an

effectual barrier to the incursions of sheep and cattle, but save a great deal, both of labour and expence, to the individuals engaged in erecting it.

The destruction of the annual and perennial weeds which more or less infest every field in the country, is another indispensible preparatory step towards ensuring a good crop of corn. The annual weeds may be destroyed by mowing them with a sharp scythe before seeding; but cross-ploughing is the most effectual means of removing the perennials. This species of summer-fallow is besides a most useful preliminary to the rotation of crops. The plough, however, at present in use, requires such a number of oxen to drag, and people to direct it, that, unless in very urgent cases, it would neither be desirable nor economical to employ it. A single person, with two ponies well broken in, could as easily manage a plough of a construction resembling that used in almost every part of Scotland, and turn up more ground in a day, than can be effected by the awkward and slender machine at present in general use.

Composts.—As the cattle are few in number which the Zetland peasantry can afford to keep, there is but a scanty accumulation of farm yard dung, and it therefore becomes an object of the first importance, to prepare manure from other sources. This, however, is fortunately within their reach. The peat moss, which is so abundant and so much depreciated by the Zetland farmers in every department of farming, may be converted to the most useful purposes. It is a real vegetable matter, in a certain state of decay, and when brought into complete decomposition, becomes a rich and fertile soil. When dry, quick-lime alone has a sudden and powerful effect in attenuating and decomposing it; but as this substance is sometimes difficult to be obtained, and often expensive, it becomes necessary to procure a substitute. Sea-weed has been observed to have a great effect in bringing moss earth into a state similar to that produced by lime.* This substance is torn off from the rocks, and driven on the shores by the surf of the sea, and it is frequently in a state of putrefaction before it is

* Transactions of the Highland Society, vol. ii.

carried off. A compost bed may be formed in the following manner. Let a dry spot be selected on, or in the neighbourhood of, the field to be manured : let first a layer of firm turf, of about twelve feet long and eight feet broad, be laid on the field to serve as a bottom : then lay on alternate layers of dung, peat, and weed, until it be four feet high, taking care always to interpose a layer of sea-weed or dung, between each layer of peat. The peat should be dry, and cut into as small pieces as possible ; and the scourings of ditches, the mould of old dykes, and the rich greasy matter exposed in summer after the drying up of small lochs, may be advantageously incorporated with the other ingredients of the compost. The compost should not exceed four feet in height, as too great a degree of compression would impede the decomposition and intimate commixture of the substances composing it. This process should commence in December or January, so that the manure may be in a state to be laid on the ground in spring. By this means the quantity of manure might be quadrupled, and the resulting benefits would, in many cases, be proportionally great.

Crops.—The demands on the soil are but few, and in ordinary seasons it repays the labour spent on it, as abundantly as in more favourable climates. Barley or bear, oats, potatoes and cabbage, have been hitherto almost the only articles which the ground has been called upon to produce.

Both oats and bear might certainly, in some seasons, be sown much earlier than is commonly done, and with proper attention to the previous manuring of the ground, they would be reaped proportionally sooner than they are observed to be. A tendency to early maturation might be aided, by selecting and preserving for seed, those stalks which shot and ripened first. A field of bear in the neighbourhood of Lerwick, belonging to Mr Mouat of Anne's Brae, was almost all blade-shot by the 24th of June 1808, and the whole crop of Zetland was in a state to be cut down by the 26th of August. Such an occurrence is no doubt very rare; but a more watchful attention to the grain crop, when it approaches the period of being cut down, would save much of the corn annually lost.

Potatoes were introduced into Zetland some time about the year 1730, and they have been successfully cultivated ever since. The frequent failure of the grain crops has induced the people to pay more attention to the culture of this valuable root, and the quantity planted is annually increasing.*

Different species of cabbage grow in Zetland, and all of them are of excellent flavour; but few of the farmers plant a number sufficient for their ordinary consumption, during even a part of the year. The poor people boil cabbage and potatoes together, which being mixed up with a little butter, forms a wholesome article

* There is an ingenious paper by Mr Knight, in Part I. of Volume I. of the transactions of the Horticultural Society, on a mode of obtaining new varieties of early potatoes. As this plant never seeds nor blossoms, the only mode of propagating it, is by dividing and planting its tuberous root. Mr Knight conceived, that the constant failure of the early potatoe to produce seeds, was occasioned by the "preternaturally early formation of the tuberous root, which draws off for its support that portion of the sap which, in other plants of the same species, affords nutriment to the blossoms and seeds;" and experiment soon satisfied him that this conjecture was

of food. The roots and the outer blades they give to the cattle, and generally in a half boiled state, which is certainly an improper mode of exhibiting them.

Turnips have never been reared in Zetland in the field, except in the parish of Tingwall. The Rev. Mr Turnbull has enclosed a great part of his glebe, and he has shewn what care and attention, well directed, can do, even on a Zetland farm. He tried wheat last year, and although rather late sown, it came on surprizingly well. He has repeated it again this season. His turnips succeeded completely, and the crop was as abundant, and of as excellent quality, as any in the kingdom. The general

well founded. He therefore proposes to check completely the growth of the tuberous roots without affecting the fibrous ones which nourish the stem, and by this means produce blossoms; and he thinks it "not improbable, that by introducing the farina of the small and very early varieties into the blossoms of those of larger size, and somewhat later habits, moderately early varieties, adapted to field culture and winter use, might be obtained." The investigation may be considered, as yet, rather in the light of an elegant experiment on vegetable physiology than as an agricultural improvement.

cultivation of turnips would form an invaluable improvement on the Zetland system of farming, for, with the exception of a very small quantity of straw, and bad hay, there is really nothing in a snowy season on which the cattle can feed. Owing to this circumstance, the people either lose them by death, or they are compelled to kill them themselves, to lessen the loss. The common turnips agree extremely well, both with the climate and soil of Zetland; and they should be sown early in the month of June. Drilling machines are no doubt the best adapted for this purpose, but by a little attention the seed may be arranged in pretty accurate ridges without them, and the want of them should not prevent the culture of this valuable root. As it would be impossible to keep the turnips in the ground, and at the same time preserve them from being destroyed by the sheep and swine, while the dykes form such imperfect obstacles to their incursions, it becomes necessary to store them soon after the harvest is in. To perform this operation well, requires considerable attention. The pulling of the turnip should always take place in dry

weather, so that as little earth as possible may adhere to the roots. "Grasp the turnips by the leaves, give them a smart turn about half round, and then pull them upright from the ground. During this operation, the bulbs revolve on the top-root as on an axis; the rotatory motion breaks the lateral fibres, and rubs off the adhering earth. It is obvious that this method is much preferable to the common way of raising turnips clumsily in each hand, and of knocking their bulbs together till the adhering earth fall off."

"Experience has amply demonstrated the necessity of cutting off the leaves and top-root, (provincially called topping and tailing), and ascertained the place where these operations should be performed. The section should be made close to the bulb. If the bulb itself be wounded, rottenness is then apt to ensue, and, though it should be prevented, a quantity of the juice oozes out, proportioned to the extent of the wound. The root is disliked by all animals, as its acrid quality occasions an immoderate discharge of bile, with its natural

consequences, gripes and looseness. When any part of the leaves is left, turnips are liable to vegetate, on receiving a slight degree of heat. As it is impossible, in practice, always to hit the point of excellence, and to perform the section with mathematical exactness, the operators should be careful to err on the safe side, to leave part of the leaves or root, rather than to injure the bulb; as it is wiser to run the hazard of a slight vegetation, than of entire putrefaction."* When the turnips have been thus prepared, a dry spot should be chosen for the depot. Let the bottom of it be well covered with straw; and let the turnips be laid down in the form of a tapering ridge, of about five or six feet broad, four high, and of any length. The whole should be covered with a thick thatch of straw, and this secured by ropes. Turnips stored in this manner retain their nutritious powers, and a considerable degree of flavour, for several months; but they are observed not to be so well relished by cattle, as when they have been preserved in the earth.

* Article *Agriculture*, Edinburgh Encyclopædia.

It is, however, the only mode, under the present circumstances, of rendering turnips useful in Zetland as an article of winter fodder. As keen frosts seldom come on there before Christmas, and, indeed, seldom continue long at a time, it is probable, that if the enclosures were sufficiently high to prevent the incursions of sheep, they might often be preserved the whole season in the ground.

Grasses have never been cultivated in Zetland, but there are many luxuriant natural meadows, and some rich grazing islands in it. The most extensive meadows occur in Conings burgh. The quantity of hay produced yearly in the country is very inconsiderable, and the grass on the general pastures stunted and scanty.

White clover *(trifolium album)* is very common in Zetland. Red clover *(trifolium purpureum perenne)* occurs also, though not so frequently as the former. A few attempts have been made to propagate the latter by seeds, but sufficient attention was not paid to the

soil, which should be of a clayey or calcareous nature, and they were not so successful as they otherwise might have been.

Rye-grass *(lolium perenne)* grows naturally in Zetland in many places; and every attempt to cultivate it artificially has fully succeeded. The perennial species is better adapted for general use in Zetland than the annual, as pasture ought to be a chief object in that country; but the annual may be used occasionally in the rotation after turnips.

The scented vernal grass *(anthoxanthum odoratum)* abounds in the natural meadows, and communicates that fine flavour which hay exhales shortly after it has been mown, and which is so universally observed to prevail in all the Zetland meadows. The seeds of this grass, although easily collected, are never sown.

Besides these, there are many other species of grasses in the Zetland islands highly deserving of culture. It is a branch of farming attended with very little expence, and it is generally successful.

The following rotation of crops might be practised with success in Zetland:

In the clay-loams which occur in the parishes of Tingwall and Whiteness,

1. Summer-fallow, with dung,
2. Wheat or barley,
3. Clover and rye-grass,
4. Oats.

In the thin clay soil of Unst and Papa-Stour,

1. Fallow, with dung,
2. Barley,
3. Grass,
4. Grass,
5. Oats.

In some of the mossy soils which have been well brought in,

1. Fallow, or turnips with dung,
2. Oats of an early variety,
3. Clover and perennial rye-grass,
4. Pasture for several years.

In the sandy soil of Dunrossness, Sandness, and Fetlar,

1. Turnips consumed on the ground,
2. Barley,
3. Grass,
4. Oats.

A little experience and attention on the part of the farmer, will soon ascertain the exact species of rotation most applicable to particular soils.

Cultivation of new ground.—From what I have already stated respecting the limited effect produced by the utmost exertions of a Zetland tenant in cultivating ground, I am persuaded, that in every instance, where it is the object to enclose and improve unbroken ground, it would conduce more to the advantage, both of landholder and tenant, if the former were to cultivate the whole originally himself, and afterwards let the ground at a fair rent to the tenant. The heritor would in this way as effectually increase the number of his merks as if he had purchased them from another person already cultivated, and for half the price; and by concentrating his property, he would render his estate more valuable.

The soil of the uncultivated parts of Zetland is various, but the great bulk of it consists of a deep moss. When a piece of mossy ground, therefore, has been fixed upon, as being conveniently situated for cultivation, let it first be drained; and this may sometimes be done on very easy terms. As peat is the only fuel used by the tenants, it matters very little to them, from what spot of the scatthold it is obtained, provided it be good, and contiguous to their farms. It fortunately happens, that in places near the sea, and therefore most favourably situated for being enclosed, there is generally a gradual descent. By directing them to cut peat in parallel lines, in the course of the descent, leaving a certain space between each line, ditches will be made, and planks of ground formed of any size. But if the planks cannot be formed in the economical manner just recommended, the expence of employing men expressly to make them is by no means great; and the peats thrown up on the occasion, would become, when dry and pulverized, a valuable ingredient in any future compost. The ground ought then immediately to be enclosed

by a dyke, which should in every instance be surrounded externally by a ditch.

If the moss be very deep, which can be ascertained during the draining of it; and if it rest upon a clay bottom, as occurs in Bressa, Yell, Delting, and some other parts of the country, a portion of the moss may be taken off and thrown into the sea, leaving about a foot and a half of the putrifying matter called *black-clod*, to become the new soil. This kind of procedure has been frequently practised in Zetland by the tenants themselves; and such a soil has yielded a heavy crop of oats the first year.

But it sometimes happens, that it is neither the wish of the cultivator to carry off any part of the moss, nor could this perhaps be effected but at a great expence. Although the tenant cannot afford to apply the necessary quantity of lime, the landholder must not neglect this useful auxiliary. It answers extremely well to spread it at first over the surface of the ground, and allow it gradually to mix and incorporate with the moss. Mr Mouat has successfully

practised this mode of using lime, on bare mossy ground in the neighbourhood of Lerwick. It improves the verdure, and attenuates and divides the superior strata of the moss.

Potatoes, in lazy beds, are the fittest crop to be taken off a perfectly mossy soil for the first year, as they seldom require dung. After the first crop of potatoes, additional lime should be used, and the ground well cut and divided by the spade; it will then produce good oats. By alternating oats with potatoes and turnip, and supplying the ground with manure from the composts already recommended, it will soon produce bear, and the best kinds of grass.

When the mossy soil is thin, as occurs in some parts of Northmaven, and the islands of Papa-Stour, Unst, and Fetlar, it should not be cultivated with a view to the continued production of grain crops, but to the improvement of the pasture. In this case, it answers better to mix the lime with the turf originally, and harrow them together. The first crop from such a soil may be horse-hoed turnips, and the next, bear with grass seeds, to prepare the

ground for a rich pasture. There are large tracts of ground in the parish of Walls, which might be advantageously managed in the manner now mentioned, and which at present yield scarcely any thing beyond a stunted species of heather.

I am aware that it may be objected, that it is not likely that there are any individuals who would be disposed to rent new land, when that which had long been in an arable state is untenanted. But the want of tenants has not arisen from an excess of arable land in Zetland; on the contrary, there is by far too small a proportion of it in that state for the support of the population; but it has been caused by local and accidental circumstances. The instances of land remaining without tenants have occurred chiefly in the island of Unst, and occasionally in the parish of Tingwall. In the former, the land is in many places poor, of the smallest or six-penny class, and burdened with heavy public payments; and in Tingwall the few enclosures which have remained untenanted, have been brought to that state either in consequence of an exorbitant rent having been demanded

for them, or the preposterous nature of the tenure. New land improved in the manner which I have stated would possess several advantages; the rent would be moderate, and it would be exonerated, for a time at least, from the payment of scatt, cess, or corn teind.*

To diffuse a general spirit of industry in the pursuits of agriculture, and to wean the ignorant peasants of Zetland from their obstinate adherence to ancient practices, the heritors themselves must set the example on a small scale, and lure the tenants to follow them, by a judicious distribution of premiums to the most successful imitators. If the result of the experiment be advantageous, they are sufficiently sagacious to adopt and persevere in it; but advice and direction, even though illustrated by example, will fail, if that example imply the possession either of capital or of means beyond their reach.

* Last year, the Board of Agriculture appointed a gentleman to survey and examine the modes of conducting the different branches of husbandry in Orkney and Zetland, and as he is familiarly acquainted with the subject in its various details, much real benefit may result to them from his visit.

With a view to the improvement of their native land, a patriotic society was established in Zetland last year, by a few gentlemen. It has since received a considerable accession of members, and it now includes a great proportion of the influence and ability of the country. To rouse early a spirit of inquiry, and to direct the mind to useful pursuits, the society has dispersed several copies of Aiton's treatise on Moss Earth, among the parish schoolmasters, and requested that the more simple and perspicuous passages may be frequently read by the scholars. A quantity of turnip seed has also been distributed among the more industrious and intelligent farmers, and premiums offered to the most successful cultivators. This society has also framed a plan for establishing a fund for the relief of the widows and orphans of fishermen, and of worn-out fishermen themselves, which has already received the warm support of several extensive proprietors. The scheme is of such a nature as to be accessible to every tenant, and yet, from the number of individuals in Zetland of the class of contributors which it embraces, is calculated at the same time to be speedily productive. The ob-

jects for whose relief this fund has been instituted, are often reduced to depend for the means of existence on the casual donations of charity. As its views are purely philanthropic, and tend to produce a general good, it is to be hoped that all the Zetland heritors will cheerfully concur in giving it that animated and substantial aid which can alone render it permanently beneficial.

Trees.—I formerly mentioned, that there were several strong analogies in favour of the opinion, that trees had, at one time, been very general over Zetland; and, before taking leave of the subject of agriculture, I shall state them. The curious assertion, that Einar, one of the earls of Orkney and Zetland, had in the ninth century pointed out to the islanders a mode of obtaining fuel from turf, as the wood had by that time been greatly exhausted, must have had some foundation. The tradition has been so well preserved, and so generally believed, that little doubt can remain as to the fact. Trunks of trees are still to be seen in different places imbedded in the moss. At the head of a lake, which has an under communication

with the sea, near a place called Scatsta, in the parish of Delting, are the remains both of roots and trunks of trees, and the wasting and falling down of the moss, annually exhibits the traces of more. On the verdant and sheltered borders of a small rivulet, in the same parish, grow considerable numbers of slender rowans and mountain ash. Similar appearances occur on the west side of Rona's Hill in the parish of Northmaven; nor can any person, at present alive, trace the date of their plantation.

The natural progress of the decay of trees, in mossy countries, contributes to support this opinion. There is a circumstantial account, by the earl of Cromartie, in the Philosophical Transactions, of the process by which woods naturally decay and disappear, eminently illustrative of the subject. In the year 1651, his lordship saw a plain in the parish of Lockburn covered over with a firm standing wood, which was so old, that not only the trees had no green leaves upon them, but the bark was totally thrown off; which he was informed by the old country people, was the uniform manner in which fir woods terminated, and that in the

course of twenty or thirty years more, the trees would cast themselves up by the roots. About fifteen years thereafter, the earl had occasion to travel the same road, and he observed that there was not a tree, nor the appearance of a root of any of them to be seen, and the plain where the wood had stood, was covered with a flat green moss or morass. On asking the country people what had become of the wood, he was informed that no one had been at the trouble to carry it away, and that it had all been overturned by the wind: that the trees lay thick over each other, and that the moss or bog had overgrown the whole timber, which, they added, was occasioned by the moisture which came down from the high hills above it, and stagnated upon the plain, and that nobody could yet pass over it. This, however, his lordship endeavoured to accomplish, and he slipt up to the arm-pits. "Before the year 1699, the whole piece of ground was become a solid moss, wherein the peasants dug turf or peat, which, however, was not yet of the best sort."* It is extremely probable that some similar changes have taken place in Zetland.

* Philos. Trans. No. 330. abridg. vol. v. p. 272.

Orkney appears to be nearly in the same state of nakedness with respect to trees as Zetland is in, although there are similar remains in it of former forests. There are still a few small trees, Dr Barry informs us, in the island of Hoy. From a manuscript account of Deerness in Orkney, written in the fifteenth century, it appears that this district had been covered with wood, and infested with wild beasts. Mr Mackaile visited Orkney in 1683, and in his "short relation of the most considerable things" in that country, he mentions, that in the south of Deersound there were then still to be seen the remains of a little wood.*

But if wood once grew in Zetland, it may be asked, why does every attempt at present made to rear trees in it uniformly fail? That many attempts to rear trees have been unsuccessful, must be acknowledged; but it requires to be ascertained, whether the failure should be ascribed altogether, to the incapability of the situation to produce them, or to the imperfect and incomplete nature of the attempts

* Barry's History of Orkney, p. 283.

which have been hitherto made. Many causes conspire to retard or prevent the growth of trees in this country. The wood which originally grew having very probably been subjected to a gradual and natural decay, proves that the soil, in those parts at least, had become unfit for its further nourishment and increase, and it would be vain to expect its reproduction in them. The general destruction, too, of so effectual a shelter for young shoots, prevents new ones from ever acquiring that degree of strength which could enable them to resist the heavy gales of winter. The insular situation of Zetland, and the want of a continental heat to invigorate the young shoots during spring and summer, has been considered a principal obstacle to their acquiring sufficient strength and size. This cause operates no doubt to a considerable extent, but I am disposed to think that its influence has been overrated. In a few gardens, trees grow and flourish to a considerable extent, and it has been observed, that even those which have been planted lately grow the height of the wall, and cease to rise only when it no longer shelters them. Were the want of a certain degree of

temperature in the ground, the sole, or even the chief cause why trees do not grow in Zetland, its effects ought to be more general than they are observed to be, and no shoot would be able to resist the severity of the winter cold. That trees formerly existed in this country, there is every just reason to believe, and the wood which then covered its surface, must, at the commencement of its growth, have had to contend with similar severities of climate as are at present believed to prevent its regeneration. A more serious cause, I apprehend, than the want of absolute heat, is the great and sudden vicissitudes of temperature which take place, which it is impossible to foresee, and difficult to counteract. These arrest the progress of vegetation, and often destroy the buds as fast as they are formed. To this may be added, the effect of heavy gales of wind, which prevail for weeks together, and which check the growth of every thing that is not carefully protected from their destructive agency.

These natural obstacles to the growth of wood in Zetland have never been attempted to be effectually obviated. The few modern at-

tempts to rear trees have been confined to gardens, and these have been on a very circumscribed scale, yet in several instances they have succeeded in such a manner as to afford favourable indications of what care and attention might accomplish. The gardens of Mr Gifford of Busta, and the late sir John Mitchell of Westshore, furnish the best specimens of the effects of culture on trees, and both are situated close to the sea side, which, in the latitude of Zetland, is surely not the most favourable for the growth of an infant wood.

An inland situation should be chosen for the purpose, and such a one might be found in the parishes of Tingwall, Whiteness and Weesdale. Towards the head of Weesdale-voe would, perhaps, be found the most eligible situation for an extensive plantation. The moss there is not deep, the general soil is good, and it lies over limestone. The larch, the birch, and the rowan, flourish in the Highlands under less favourable circumstances. A considerable space of ground should be prepared, and inclosed by a wall sufficiently high to shelter the plants from the wind, and also to prevent their being trodden

down by cattle during the winter; and this space should be divided into still smaller enclosures, until a clump of trees had grown up sufficiently vigorous to protect itself. Seeds, or very young shoots of trees which grow spontaneously, should be selected from corresponding latitudes, and transplanted before they had acquired the constitution of the soil from which they were taken. Norway and the north of Scotland are the most likely places from which they could be obtained. From the solitary experiment by Mr Ross of Sound, in the parish of Weesdale, it appears, that seeds are preferable to young plants. Among others, he has in his garden a plane tree, grown from a seed, which in May 1808 was eleven feet high, and measured eighteen inches round at the trunk. It was then five years old. He transplanted two shoots from this tree to another garden, both of which appeared to be in a thriving condition. This trial may be considered as a favourable commencement, and it justifies the hope of future success. Could wood be made to grow generally in Zetland, and ornament the borders of the lakes and more inland situa-

tions, it would form an interesting addition to the wild scenery of the sea and the rocks.

Section III.

Observations on the introduction of Sheep-farming into Zetland.

As the grain crops so frequently fail, and are at all times precarious, some have suggested, that it would be more advantageous to this country to give up in a great measure the prosecution of agriculture, and substitute sheep-farming in its stead. A proposal, however, which, if adopted, must necessarily subvert the former habits and views of the majority of the inhabitants, should be received with caution, and its merits examined with impartiality.

That the introduction of sheep-farming into Zetland would not conduce to ameliorate the condition of the tenants, will appear obvious from the following considerations. They have the privilege, at present, of pasturing on the

scatthold or common as many sheep and cattle, of every description, as the hills can support. Without forming enclosures at a considerable expence, there is no mode of improving the vegetation on the mossy hills, nor, consequently, of increasing the quantity of pasture for an additional number of sheep; and every such enclosure would necessarily abridge the means of raising stock which the tenants at present enjoy, without affording them any compensation for the loss. Some of the more inland black mossy hills appear scarcely to be capable of improvement, and the verdure over the whole country is but of short duration. Without having actually witnessed it, one can hardly form an idea of the withering and blasting influence of the alternate rains and keen frosts which prevail in winter, and which check, frequently until May, the appearance of general vegetation. The conversion of large tracts of arable land, at present farmed by numerous families, into sheep pasture, would deprive multitudes of the means of existence, without very materially increasing the range or quantity of winter pasture to the sheep; for all the arable land and natural meadows are open to their in-

cursions during that season. The expatriation of a number of individuals from a country to which they are attached, and who are generally unfit for any other, although it might tend to augment the income of a few proprietors of land, could surely never be viewed in the light of an improvement. The opinion of Goldsmith on this subject, although perhaps not altogether accurate, as applied to our present ideas of society and luxury, are yet true to the feelings of the heart, and our best associations.

> Ill fares the land, to hast'ning ills a prey,
> Where wealth accumulates, and men decay;
> Princes and lords may flourish or may fade,
> A breath can make them, as a breath has made;
> But a bold peasantry, their country's pride,
> When once destroy'd can never be supplied.

But even on the supposition that the tenants have been expelled from their farms, it is not at all clear that the profits to the heritor, from the breeding of sheep, would even indemnify him for the certain loss of the rents of the lands, derived from the joint operations of fishing and farming. This indemnification could be insured only by the command of a competition market

for the carcase and the wool. But there is positively no certain sale for any considerable quantity of mutton in Zetland, at any period of the year. Even at present, when the scab, and successive bad seasons, have so thinned the country of sheep, that there is not one left in fifty of the number that was a few years ago, yet, notwithstanding that circumstance, mutton can still be bought from 2d. to 3d. per pound; and it is not likely that an increase in the number of sheep would increase the rate of sale. When ships of war put into Bressa-sound, they raise the price of provisions of every kind, and that of mutton among the rest. But this is a very precarious and accidental outlet, and the greatest demands are often made in winter, when they cannot be supplied. A Zetland gentleman has already brought this matter to the test of experiment. He did indeed convert a considerable tract of arable land into open pasture ground, but possessing several large islands, he was able to carry on the system of sheep-farming, without much inconvenience to his tenants. He raised a large flock in a few years, and on the first attempt to sell the carcase at Lerwick, the only town in the country,

the price offered was considered fair, and the scheme promised success. But as the immediate demand was soon supplied, the purchasers availed themselves of the necessity of the case, and refused to buy more, unless the price was reduced to a standard of their own. As the owner of the sheep, however, was under no necessity of selling them below what he conceived to be their value, he chose rather to keep them to himself than comply with an unreasonable demand, and he sent no more to the market at Lerwick. The wool, also, which the flock yielded, after deducting the expence of freight, sold at Leith at comparatively a low rate.

The want of a market, therefore, in the country, for the sale of the fresh carcase, is a strong objection against the introduction of sheep farming into Zetland. To send the sheep alive out of the country, could not be done but at an expence which the trade could not support, and there is no mode of curing this species of animal food to enable it to keep so as to become an article of beneficial exportation, nor would

the sale of the tallow alone, make up for the loss.

The wool, whether exported in the state of raw material, or manufactured into stockings in the country, would always be burdened with the expence of freight, and probably also with the deduction consequent on agency. So much has the demand for Zetland stockings failed of late, that not more than £. 5000 worth are now sent annually out of the country, when only twelve years ago the sum derived from this source was estimated at £. 17,000. This deficiency is in part to be ascribed to the interruption which the war has given to the Zetland trade with the Dutch and German fishermen; but a great failure has also occurred in the demand for Zetland stockings all over Britain, which has no doubt arisen from the great increase in the number of sheep, both in Scotland and England, during that time, and the uncommon degree of attention bestowed at present in these countries to increase the quantity and improve the quality of wool. This consideration, too, forms another argument against the policy of

selecting sheep-farming as a branch of husbandry peculiarly adapted to Zetland, encumbered, as it must be, with so many inconveniences, both of a general and a local nature.

Besides being followed by depopulation to a considerable extent, and attended with the fruitless effect of rearing, at a great expence, a quantity of produce for which there is no certain market, a preference given to sheep-farming in Zetland would operate powerfully in checking the breed of cattle; a species of produce which has at all times been found highly useful and beneficial. Without entering into a comparative estimate of the relative value of sheep and cattle, in situations where the opportunities of disposing of both are equal, I shall merely observe, that in Zetland, cattle possess a decided superiority over sheep as an article of general sale. Besides producing milk and butter, which are articles of daily use, good fresh beef always sells well, even in the country, at every season, and considerable quantities are exported annually in a salted state. The hides, when not used at home, can be sold to good account at Leith.

The kind and quantity of winter fodder which the country produces, is also better calculated for the use of cattle than of sheep, and the dung of the former contributes to the fertility of the soil.

The real Zetland ponies, too, deserve more attention than is ever paid to them. They are handsome, hardy, and sagacious, but few are taken under cover, even during the worst weather in winter, nor do they receive any food but what they find on the hills, or pick up along the shores of the sea. Although they seldom die of absolute want, yet the kind of food on which they are compelled to feed at that season, lays the foundation of diseases from which often they never recover. A considerable number of ponies are exported annually.

Several gentlemen have proposed to introduce the Merino breed of sheep into Zetland. These animals can be made to accommodate themselves to almost every variety of climate; and appear to thrive equally well on the warm plains of Spain, and on the cold mountains of

Sweden. Their wool, too, is as abundant and fine on the rump as on the shoulder; they are below the native middle size of English sheep, and their flesh is delicate and nutritious. But even in Sweden, the most northern part of Europe into which this breed has yet been introduced, the attentive cultivators bestow a degree of attention and care on their management, which I apprehend it would be difficult, if not absolutely impossible, to practise in the Zetland islands. "In the winter, which continues at least seven months (in Sweden), they feed them (the sheep) in the house, allowing six feet square to each sheep. They give each daily something more than two English pounds of hay, with an addition of dried leaves of birch, willow, maple, alder, ash, elm, oak, &c. the leaves and stalk of the hop; peas, haulm, and barley or oat straw."* As objects of curiosity, Merino sheep may be brought to Zetland; but if the observations already made on the propriety of introducing sheep-farming into

* *Vide* Dr Parry's Essay on the nature, produce, origin, and extension of the Merino breed of sheep, in the "Communications to the Board of Agriculture." Part ii. vol. v.

this country be correct, they anticipate the necessity of any further discussion on the subject.

But while I object to a decisive preference being given to sheep-farming in Zetland, above other branches of husbandry, I am aware that much might be done by judicious management, towards increasing the number and improving the breed of that animal, and thereby contributing to the comfort and convenience of the inhabitants, especially of the poorer classes. Instead of being allowed to run wild, the sheep should be under the controul of shepherds, who could at any time make them change their pasture. Attention ought to be paid to secure them shelter during the winter, and such quantities of hay and turnip raised, as would afford them subsistence when the ground was covered with snow. Those gentlemen who possess large islands, and considerable tracts of good hill pasture, might occupy both principally with sheep; and as the quantity of wool annually produced in the country is insufficient to supply the demand, a pretty sure market would be obtained for almost all that they

could spare. Care should also be bestowed on them during the seasons of lambing, weaning, and shearing, points which, at present, are totally neglected. By a due degree of attention to these circumstances, the native Zetland sheep might be rendered a source of positive wealth. They are, of all others, the species best adapted to the climate of the country, and by a careful separation of the particular varieties, they might be made to yield as fine wool as any in the world. They would supply materials for the manufacture of cloth and stockings, become an occasional article of sale in the country, and furnish, in times of scarcity, a useful article of food to the possessor; and the breeding of sheep in Zetland would thus co-operate, and not interfere, with the prosecution of other branches of husbandry which contribute more to the general prosperity of the inhabitants.

CHAPTER V.

OF THE FISHERIES OF ZETLAND.

IF the climate be unfriendly to vegetation, and the earth yield with reluctance her productions to the Zetlander, the sea liberally supplies his wants, and, under judicious management, is the natural source of wealth to his country. The coast, and the bays in the different islands, abound with various kinds of fish, some of which may be caught every fair day, at every season of the year; yet beyond their consumption as an article of food, the prosecution of fishing by the natives of Zetland is, comparatively speaking, but a modern pursuit. For many years the Flemings and Dutch were the chief adventurers, and engrossed the whole fishing, not only in the neighbourhood of these islands, but also on the coasts of Scotland. So obvious were the ad-

vantages which these foreigners derived from this branch of industry, that in the reign of James III. the Parliament, in 1471, enacted, "That certain lords, spiritual and temporal, and burgesses, cause make great ships, busses, pink boats, with nets, and all other necessaries for fishing." In 1540, the Dutch and other foreigners appear still to have maintained their ascendancy, from the oppressive manner in which we have seen that they treated the native fishers, and which hostile conduct induced James V. to interfere in their behalf. A remission of the duties payable on fishing materials of every kind, took place in 1705, and a small bounty was given on every last of herrings exported from Scotland. Since that period, various acts of Parliament have been passed, more or less favourable to the fisheries; but as they relate chiefly to the herring fishery, which has been hitherto but little attended to by the natives of Zetland, I shall consider the fisheries, at present, in the order of their importance, as practised by the inhabitants themselves.

Section I.

Of the Ling or White Fishery.

The ling, tusk and cod, commonly called the white fishing, is the one which has chiefly engaged the attention of the Zetlanders; yet, even this they divided long with the Dutch. This enterprizing and commercial people came annually to the country about the middle of May, and supplied the fishermen with the necessary means of carrying on the fishing. They bought from the latter their wet fish, which they cured in Zetland and carried to Holland. The booths which they occupied can still be traced in several places. About the year 1712, after certain favourable regulations had been passed respecting the duties on salt, and a debenture granted on fish exported, the proprietors of land took the fishing of ling into their own hands. They supplied their tenants, as the Dutch had done, with materials for carrying on the fishing, and received their wet fish at a stipulated rate.

The ling are very numerous on the coast of Zetland at all seasons of the year; but, like other fish, they have their periods of change and migration, and sometimes unexpectedly quit the ground which they have been long in the habit of frequenting. The fishermen can sometimes trace them in their passage round the country, and boats from the different districts catch a good many of them in their progress. But if bad weather happen to come on during the time, they lose the opportunity, and the ling, in the mean time, reach the end of their voyage. The ling approach the shore during winter, and gradually quit it as spring and summer advance; so that towards the end of July they are met with in the greatest numbers about forty miles from the land. There is only one exception to this general view of the habits of the ling, and it occurs in the neighbourhood of the islands of Burra. There the ling are to be met with in considerable numbers at all seasons of the year, and but a short distance from the land. Some are caught, indeed, inshore, during summer, at other parts of the country, but the number is trifling, and the chance of meeting them very precarious;

whereas, so certain are the Burra fishermen of finding them, that it is a practice among them to divide the range of fishing ground; and the occupier of a farm has generally also a particular spot allotted to him, on which he sets his lines. Much practical benefit would result from a better acquaintance with the natural history of the ling than the fishermen are at present possessed of.

The regular fishing season commences about the 20th of May, and it terminates on the 12th of August. In general, it is found to be necessary for mutual accommodation, that the fishermen assemble at particular stations, so as to be near to the scene of their business, and to afford facilities of curing and drying the fish. Hence the greater number of fishermen are removed many miles from their families, whom they usually visit on Saturday, and provide with a weekly supply of fish. In a few places the fishermen go off but a short way, and from their very door, and thus combine in the same day their agricultural and their fishing occupations.

The boats employed in this fishing are imported from Norway in boards, and are set up in the country. They are light, and have been found, by long experience, to be admirably adapted for encountering the varied kind of wave to which they are exposed. They vary in size, according as the fishing ground is nearer or more distant from the land, from fifteen to eighteen feet of keel, provided with a lug-sail, and from three to six or seven men. The latter class is the most general size at present in use; the smaller ones being confined to one district in the country.

A boat is divided into six shares, and if all the crew be farmers, each has a share. Sometimes the landholder has two or more shares, and hires men to perform the duty of them; and in some instances the *skipper*, or master of the boat, has two shares. The stretch of lines which the boats carry, varies in different parts of the country. On the west side some carry one hundred and twenty lines. Each line, or *bought* as it is called, is about fifty fathoms, so that a boat in this case carries six thousand fathoms of lines, which extend nearly seven miles. On

the north, east, and south sides of the country they seldom exceed fifty lines. The line is about the fifth part of an inch in diameter, and the hooks are fixed to it by small cords, with an interval of five fathoms between each. The boat, sail, oars, lines, hooks, and all the fishing implements, are the property of the sharers in the boat; and they are furnished in general by the landholder at prime cost; and, in some instances, the fishermen have received them as a boon.

When every necessary arrangement has been made, the boats from the different parishes assemble at the fishing stations; and the fishermen avail themselves of every favourable moment that occurs, to prosecute the fishing. The assemblage in one place of so many individuals, forms a busy and an interesting scene. The crew of each boat has a small hut or *lodge*, in which they reside when on shore, the walls of which alone remain during winter. The roof, which consists of thin pieces of wood covered with turf, is removed every season. They bring no other provisions with them than meal; fish they procure for themselves; and

the different factors, on the spot, supply them with spirits. The first object is to obtain bait. Haddocks, and the young seth then twelve-months old, are the kinds generally preferred; but if these cannot be had in sufficient quantity, cod, tusk, and even ling, are substituted. When the day is favourable, the boats set off for the fishing ground, which is called the *haaf*, from 10 o'clock A. M. to 2 o'clock of the afternoon. If all have been supplied with bait, they set off at the same instant, and make great and often unnecessary exertions to try who shall first gain the fishing ground, with no other means of support than a small quantity of bread hastily baked, a few gallons of water, and a slender stock of spirits. Having reached the fishing ground, they proceed to bait, and set their lines, which, although extending over so great a space, they are seldom provided with more than three buoys. The boat keeps close to the buoy last floated, and from it the line is hauled in, generally a few hours after it has been set. Eighteen and twenty score of ling have been taken at a single haul, for it is but seldom that the lines are set twice in the same night. Six or seven score are considered, on

an average, to be a good haul. Besides ling, tusk and cod, hallibut, skate and other kinds of fish are caught at the same time. The three first being marketable fish, are sold wet to the landholder or tacksman, at a certain rate the hundred-weight; and they are valued in the order in which I have enumerated them. The other kinds of fish belong to the fishers, and their families. The 24th of June, old stile (St John's day), is celebrated by the fishermen as a festival; and on the 12th of August (Lammas day) the fishing is considered at an end.

Under the most favourable circumstances of the weather and tide, the boats remain at sea from eighteen to thirty hours; and, if a gale of wind comes on off the land, they are sometimes out two or three days. Formerly it was the practice to endeavour to pull to the shore, but frequently, after having exhausted their strength in the attempt, they fell victims to the force of the wind, and were soon overwhelmed by the sea. More lately it has been the custom to try and gain the land by tacking, and fewer boats have been lost since the adoption of this practice. It is truly pain-

ful to witness the anxiety and distress which the wives of these poor men suffer on the approach of a storm. Regardless of fatigue, they leave their homes, and fly to the spot where they expect their husbands to land, or ascend the summit of a rock, and look for them on the bosom of the deep. Should they get a glimpse of a sail, they watch with trembling solicitude its alternate rise and disappearance on the waves, and, although often tranquillized by the safe arrival of the objects of their search, yet it is sometimes their lot "to hail the bark that never can return." Subjected to the influence of a variable climate, and engaged on a sea naturally tempestuous with rapid currents, scarcely a season passes over without the occurrence of some fatal accident or hair-breadth escape. Many of the latter, if accurately related, would unfold scenes of danger, and display instances of manly fortitude, no less true and astonishing than have been exhibited in the interesting voyage of Byron.

The fishermen have no concern in the curing and drying of the fish. This is a separate

branch altogether, performed by old men and boys. The salt employed on this occasion is obtained duty free, in the proportion of fifty pounds to each hundred weight of fish. Besides this, there is a debenture or premium granted by Government, of three shillings Sterling, on every hundred weight of fish exported.

Although the regular fishing of ling terminates on the 12th of August, the fishermen, in some parts of the country, catch a considerable number on hand-lines during winter and spring. Over this fishing the landholder has no controul; but it is expected, that if the tenant be in debt, he shall sell to him whatever he can spare from his own consumption. The ling caught at this season are split, and laid in salt, and they remain in the brine until the end of spring, when they are taken out, washed, and dried for exportation. They are known by the name of *winter fish*, and the quantity exported annually is, on an average, about sixty-five tons. If the ling have been well washed, if the tubs in which they have been salted be very clean, and the salt free from impurities, the fish is

found to be as juicy and well flavoured, when treated in this manner, as those are which have been caught and cured during summer. It is only in particular districts, however, that ling are caught during winter; the chief are, the islands of Unst, Fetlar, and Burra, and the parishes of Northmaven and Dunrossness.

That this mode of prosecuting the ling-fishing is defective, and that the advantages derived from it are greatly over-rated, it will not be difficult to shew. A small and slender boat can neither venture to sea with threatening weather, nor remain exposed to it for any length of time, without endangering the lives of the crew. Although gales of wind seldom continue long during the summer season, yet occasional days of blowing weather are very common, and are sufficient to interrupt the fishing for weeks in succession. It often happens, too, that though it may blow rather fresh during the day, it is moderate, and even calm, during the night; but except the boats leave the land before four o'clock of the afternoon, it is impossible to gain the fishing ground in time to avail themselves of the favourable moment. Indeed the

chance of encountering bad weather deters them from going to sea at all, unless the sky have a settled appearance; and thus the average number of trips to the haaf seldom exceeds eighteen in a season. If bad weather actually comes on after the lines have been set, they are under the necessity of leaving in the sea, all that cannot be instantly hauled up. To cruise in the neighbourhood is impossible, and a single loss of this kind at once absorbs the profits of a whole season. The few buoys employed, and the great distance from land at which the lines are usually set, check the disposition in the fishermen, to return and search for their lines, and diminish the chances of finding them.

There is another serious inconvenience attending the present mode of conducting this fishery. It sometimes happens that the ling are in great plenty on a few parts of the coast, and scarcely any on the others. A striking instance of this irregularity of appearance occurred this very last summer. The fish left the west side of the country, where they had hitherto been most abundant, and they were

found in considerable numbers on the north and east coast of Zetland, where they used to be comparatively scarce. But the labour and difficulties which attend a removal from the station at which the fishermen had originally prepared to fish, are so great as to render a change in the middle of a season altogether impracticable. Even when a boat accidentally falls in with a great quantity of fish, the opportunity of taking any considerable number is lost, as the boat can carry but few at a time, and the fish often leave the ground before the weather and other circumstances permit a return in search of more.

The quantity of ling, tusk, and cod, cured for exportation from Zetland during the summer, is about one thousand and ten tons. The following table will convey a tolerably correct idea of the quantity of fish caught, the number of men employed, and the number of boats and lines used at the different fishing stations.

Names of Districts.	Boats.	Tons.	Men.	lines to a boat.	Amount of lines.
Foula, Papa, and the stations in Northmaven, including boats from Walls, Sandness, Sansting, Aithsting, Delting, and the south and west divisions of Yell,	184	460	1104	113	20792
North and East Yell,	27	66	162	90	2430
Unst, - - -	58	136	348	50	2900
Fetlar, Skerries and Whalsey,	70	140	420	35	2450
Bressa and Quarff,	26	40	156	50	1300
Coningsburgh and Dunrossness, - -	56	100	336	50	2800
Scallaway, the Burras, and the neighbouring Islands,	20	43	120	50	1000
Boats from Lerwick, the parish of Tingwall, and other places not at regular fishing stations, handline boats,	18	25	108	45	810
	459	1010	2754	483	34482

In this estimate I have taken the average of several years, and, to simplify the calculation, I have considered all the boats to be of the largest class, with crews of six men. Certain parts of the parish of Dunrossness, and the islands of Burra, are the only exceptions which occur, and by making two small boats equal to

a large one, it is easy to average them also by the same scale. Perfect accuracy in cases of this kind is unattainable, for the number of boats varies every year, and several individuals fit out boats merely to cover the clandestine purchase of fish from the regular fishing tenants. These boats greatly exceed the average fishing of the regular boats, and as the former are very numerous, they diminish considerably the proportion to the others.

Now, if we multiply the number of lines used in each particular district, by the number of boats in that district, and add the whole together, we shall find the whole number of lines used in Zetland; which being divided by the whole number of boats, will give the number of lines which on an average each boat carries. This I find to be within a fraction of seventy-five; and to take it in round numbers I shall estimate the number at seventy-five. In every part of the country, with the exception of the islands of Burra, the profits on the fishing will be found to bear a regular proportion to the expence attending it. Thus, on the west side of Zetland, the boats generally

fish better than they do on the east side, but the risk and expence are also greater. In the islands of Burra, as the fishermen carry on the fishing themselves, from their own doors, the profit is very considerable, and the expence incurred comparatively little.

The following is the expence of a new six oared boat, eighteen feet of keel, ready for the haaf.

Boards, timber, and tar, -	£. 5	10	0
Nails, &c. and expence of building,	3	0	0
Mast, yard, and shrouds, -	0	10	0
Sail, - - -	2	0	0
Six oars, - -	1	10	0
Thofts, rudder, &c. -	0	15	0
75 boughts of lines, the average number employed by each boat, at 3s.6d.	13	2	6
	£. 26	7	6

But to form a correct idea of the annual expence incurred by such a boat, it would be necessary to ascertain the probable duration of the boat and fishing materials, their gradual

waste, and the occasional losses that occur. As a pretty fair measure of what this may be, we shall take the sum for which a boat and lines can be hired during the fishing season. It is true, the fishermen are more careful of the boat and lines when they are their own property, than when hired, yet many of them prefer this latter mode. The rate at which these articles are hired, is generally at about a third of their value, and we shall find that, in fact, this proportion is preserved.

A six-oared boat, of the size and class already described, may be hired during the fishing season for, - -	£. 2 10 0
75 lines or boughts, at 1s. 4d.	5 0 0
	£. 7 10 0

But there is the expence of meal and spirits to be added to both, which constitutes a considerable addition; and the statement will therefore stand thus:

A six-oared boat ready in every respect for the haaf, - - -	£. 7 10 0

Brought forward,	£. 7	10	0
270 libs. of meal, or nine lispunds, at 6s. per lispund, - -	2	14	0
Six gallons of spirits, at 6s. -	1	16	0
	£. 12	0	0

I have estimated the quantity of meal lower than what it generally is, from the consideration that each man, even if he were at home, would consume a certain portion of that article, although by being absent from his family he loses his share of other articles of food, which would do more than balance the deduction.

I have stated, that 1010 tons of fish are cured annually during the regular summer fishing, but it is with the wet fish only that the tenant is concerned. The fish in drying are observed to diminish uniformly three-fifths, or two tons and a half of wet fish, make one ton of dry fish; therefore, $1010 \times 2 + \frac{1}{2} = 2525$ tons; and $2525 \times 20 = 50500$ cwt.

$\frac{50500}{459} = 110\frac{10}{459}$, or the share of wet fish to each boat.

But the tenant seldom accounts to the landholder for the full amount of the ling which he catches; part is consumed as food, and a considerable portion is secretly sold to others. We shall deduct four hundred weight from each boat, and it will then stand thus: $110\frac{10}{459}$ —4=$106\frac{10}{459}$; or, in round numbers, each boat's crew fish, during the summer, 106 cwt. The average price per hundred weight is 4s.; and

106 cwt. therefore, at 4s. are	£. 21	4	0
Oil derived from the fish, -	1	12	0
	22	16	0
Deduct for the hire of the boat and lines, and expence on the fishing,	12	0	0
	£. 10	16	0

Each six-oared boat, therefore, has a profit of £. 10. 16s. on the fishing, which, divided among the crew, is £. 1. 12s. to each man.

It must be recollected, however, that the present estimate is meant to apply to those tenants only, who, by fishing to the landholders, rent their farms at comparatively a

low rent. A free fisher receives from 6s. to 6s. 6d. for the hundred weight of wet fish, free of all deductions. The highest wages given to an able-bodied expert fisher, who has no share in the boat, is L. 3. for the season; and this sum, although as great as the business can afford, is less than what almost any other species of employment would yield, and is a very inadequate compensation for the labour and risk attending it.

The profits of the landholders are next to be considered. The fish, as I have already observed, dry in, during their curing, three-fifths; or, two and a half cwt. of wet fish yield only one hundred weight of dry fish.

$2\frac{1}{2}$ cwt. of wet fish cost, -	L. 0	10 0
Curing, loss by rejection, &c.	0	3 6
	L. 0	13 6

The average price paid in Zetland, for many years, by merchants, has been 18s. 6d. per cwt. of dry fish, and therefore the landholder has a profit of 5s. on each cwt. of fish which he sells.

This is no doubt considerable; but when all the deductions consequent on this system are taken into the account, we shall find that they scarcely equal those of ordinary trade, and do not more than make up for the reduced rate at which his land is rented.

The landholders, aware of the hazardous and imperfect mode in which the ling fishery is conducted, have been anxious to improve it by every means in their power. With this view several of them have employed sloops of considerable size to accompany the boats, for the accommodation of the men, who, by remaining all the week at sea, were prepared to embrace every favourable moment which occurred. These sloops had under their protection from three to five boats, which, when not engaged in fishing, they towed astern. This establishment was not only expensive, but attended with great inconvenience. From the extensive range occupied by the lines of the different boats, they were sometimes separated to a considerable distance from each other and from the sloop. Hence, when a gale of wind came on, it was found difficult, and sometimes im-

practicable, to collect all the boats, and some of them were therefore obliged to make the best of their way to the land; and even when they were able to gain the vessel, they were frequently lost afterwards, by the breaking of the rope by which they were towed, or were seriously injured, by one dashing against the other. These boats, notwithstanding, fished better than those which had their rendezvous on shore, although not in a proportion to encourage the continuance of the system, and no sloops have been employed with this view for many years.

As the present mode of conducting the ling fishery in Zetland is evidently defective, every suggestion which tends, even to lessen the danger and inconveniences attending it, deserves an impartial consideration. It has been proposed to employ small decked vessels, of about twenty tons burden, instead of the open boats at present in use, and the precedent established by the Irish is in favour of the plan. From the year 1750 to 1763 this branch of fishing was carried on by a considerable number of small sloops from Ireland, called wherries,

about twenty tons burden, and with crews of seven and eight men each. They had no boats, and set and hauled their lines from the vessel. They appear to have succeeded tolerably well; but information having been given to the custom-house at Lerwick, that they had landed and employed salt from Ireland, and thereby evaded the duties to Government, both salt and fish were seized, and the fishing was abandoned.

A vessel of about twenty-five tons burden, with a boat not exceeding fifteen feet of keel, and provided with a crew of nine men, appears to comprehend every thing practically useful in the prosecution of the ling fishery. Let us examine, in detail, the advantages likely to result from the adoption of this plan.

The size of the vessel would ensure the safety and comfort of the men, which are certainly objects of the first importance; and without materially affecting the expence, by the increase of a few tons in the burden, would facilitate the stowage of lines, provisions, and fish. Being constantly present on the fishing-ground, the fishermen could take advantage of every

favourable state of the weather which presented itself to set their lines; and whenever they fell in with a great body of fish, they could remain on the spot and repeat their hauls. Instances have occurred frequently, when the open boats have been compelled to reject nearly as many ling as they brought on shore, and when, to use the fishermens' phrase, "they could have loaded a sloop if they had had her." In case of fish appearing more abundant on one part of the coast than on another, a change of situation could be easily effected, and thus a radical inconvenience attending the present mode of practising it completely removed.

In the event of bad weather coming on while the lines were in the sea, there would not be so great a chance of losing them with a sloop as with an open boat, for, by increasing the number of buoys, the lines might remain in the sea until the gale had abated, which in the summer time seldom continues long at a time. Indeed, this mode is practised frequently by the people who fish from the islands of Burra. As the fishing is carried on in that quarter but a

few miles from the land, and the spot where the lines are set can therefore be accurately known, if a gale come after they have been set the fishermen never attempt to haul them, but allow them to remain in the water until the weather becomes moderate. A sloop could cruise in the neighbourhood of the buoys, and if there were several sloops near each other, there would be little chance of losing the lines at any time.

While the weather was such that the vessels were able to keep at sea, even although not sufficiently mild for fishing, there would be no necessity for the whole of the vessels on any particular station quitting the fishing ground. A landholder possessing several of these vessels, or two or three landholders uniting in the same speculation, their vessels might relieve each other in succession, carry the fish caught to the shore to be cured, bring out supplies of provisions, water and bait, to the others; and thus, instead of a few occasional trips, they could maintain the fishing ground during the whole season.

The utility and necessity of a boat must be obvious. When it blew even a moderate breeze it would be found difficult to haul in the lines from the sloop, as the strain on them would endanger their breaking every moment; and if it were a perfect calm, the setting them would be both slow and laborious. A boat of the size which I have mentioned appears to be preferable to any other. It is of great consequence to have a reserve watch of men at sea, to carry on the business without interruption, while all, in succession, enjoy rest and repose. Under the protection of a sloop, three or four men are just as competent to haul and set lines as six men in one of greater magnitude. But a boat of a less size than what I have described could not conveniently stow either the fish or the lines. Besides the trifling expence of such a boat, the towing of it would be attended with less strain both to it and the vessel, and, consequently, with less risk of it being separated or destroyed. But a few trials would enable the fishermen to determine on the class of boat best adapted for the purpose.

A vessel of from twenty to twenty-five tons burden, would cost, when new, about £. 200; but if second-hand, which would answer equally well to begin with, might be bought for a much smaller sum. The landholders and tacksmen must necessarily advance the first purchase money, and although the tenants might not be able, at once, to contribute their proportion, they should, notwithstanding, have a share in the fishing, to interest them in the scheme. We have seen that the expence attending the fitting out of a common open boat for the haaf is very considerable, and that this mode of prosecuting the fishing subjects the individuals concerned in it to frequent heavy losses. It is probable that a vessel of the description which I have mentioned would fish as well as three six-oared boats, and it would be managed at an expence little more than what is attendant upon one. Instead of carrying between three and four hundred lines, which three boats frequently do, fifty or sixty would be quite sufficient, as they could be repeatedly set and hauled; and when the ling fishing was over, both vessel and men could be employed in the herring fishery.

Government might greatly contribute in forwarding the beneficial prosecution of the ling fishery in Zetland, without granting any additional bounties, by merely taking off the duty on spirits used by the fishermen, and by favouring the consumption of the fish caught. The allowance of a certain quantity of rum, duty free, to vessels of the description already mentioned, engaged in the ling fishing, would be an inducement of itself to many to practise the mode which I have recommended; and the country would be amply indemnified for the small deficiency in the revenue which it would produce, by the increased number of seamen to the navy, which this system of carrying on the fishery is calculated to afford. While fishing in open boats merely renders the fishermen hardy, the practice of managing a vessel would make them in a short time perfect seamen.

Before the late and present wars, a considerable portion of the fish caught was exported to France and Spain, but the interruption to the commercial intercourse with these countries, has obliged the landholders and mer-

chants to place their chief dependence for sale on home consumption, which is both precarious and limited. The introduction into the navy bill of fare, of a small quantity of fish, even once a-week, would afford a sure and constant market for a great proportion, and they could easily and advantageously dispose of the remainder. Such an article of diet might be usefully introduced on a *banyan* day, where, at present, no animal food is allowed. Both ling and tusk are very nutritious, well flavoured, and retain their substance much longer than cod. When well cured, they are as juicy at the end of two years as within a month after they have been salted; and by a slight degree of steeping in water, are rendered perfectly sweet to the taste.

Section II.

Of the Herring Fishery.

The natural history of the herring is but imperfectly understood; and although great

numbers appear annually on the coast of Zetland, I have not been able to collect any facts which throw much light on this interesting subject. The herrings are met with in a great body, by vessels to the north of Zetland, about the end of May, and it is well known, that, soon after, they separate into different divisions, and visit the west and east coasts of Great Britain. The Dutch fishing vessels used to follow them in their passage from the island of Unst to Buchan-ness. Herrings have been caught in some bays in Zetland in the month of November, though never in great numbers, and their fry have been seen in the sea, and taken out of the stomachs both of fish and birds, during the summer months. Hence it is probable that they spawn in some of the deep bays in Zetland, as well as on the coast of Scotland, although their retreats have not been discovered. The late Dr Walker, to whose researches natural history is deeply indebted, conceives that the passage of the herrings from the north to the coasts of Britain, is undertaken for the purpose of depositing their spawn, and that they return thither when this has been effected, and recover, by suitable food, the vigour which

they had lost. The young herrings remain a few months on the coast, until they are three or four inches long, when they leave it for a time; but the haunts to which they retire have never been detected. It is probable, however, that they remain in the neighbourhood of the coast, until the annual visit of the parent stock, when, if they have strength sufficient for the voyage, they accompany them to the north.

The herrings are well known to be extremely capricious in their visits to different places. This is observable even in the circumscribed range of Zetland. The west side of the country, in St Magnus bay and the neighbourhood of Papa-Stour, were formerly the parts of the country most regularly frequented by them, but lately they have appeared more generally on the east side. The number, however, taken by the fishermen has always been comparatively trifling.

The deep sea herring fishery has never been attempted by the Zetlanders until this present year, although the coast of their country has been long the scene of extensive fishing to

foreigners, who have reaped great and national advantages from it. I have already alluded to the antiquity of this fishery by the Flemings and the Dutch. In 1633, Mr Smith, who had been sent to Zetland by the earl of Pembroke, to make inquiries concerning the Dutch fisheries, states, that they had in that year fifteen hundred busses employed in the herring fishery, and about four hundred doggers engaged in fishing ling, tusk, and cod. "I was an eye witness of the *Hollanders* busses fishing for herring on the coast of *Shotland*, not far from *Ounst*, one of the northernmost islands. Demanding the number of them, was informed by several persons of quality, that the fleet consisted of 1500 sail, and that there were 20 wafters, as they called them, which were ships carrying about 20 guns a-piece, being the convoys of the fleet of busses; which said busses were of the burden of about 80 tun. There were also a small fleet of dogger boats, which were of the burden of 60 tun and upward, which did fish only with hooks and lines for ling and cod. Many of these boats and busses came into several havens or sounds, to fit and trim themselves. One thing was observable,

that within eight or ten dayes after the dogger boats went to sea, they came into the sound again so full laden as they could swim. The certain number of dogger boats I could not learn, but the general report was about 400."*

Mr Gifford, who wrote his description of Zetland in 1733, says, that for a period of thirty years before, there had never been at Lerwick more than three or four hundred sail at a time, although "some old men say that they have seen in Bressa Sound, at one time, 2200 busses." In the year 1702 or 1703, a squadron of six sail of French men of war, which had been sent on purpose to intercept them, fell in, off Fair Isle, with four Dutch ships of war which were protecting the busses. A battle ensued, in which, after the Dutch admiral's ship had been sunk, the remaining three made their escape. The French squadron proceeded to Bressa Sound, sent in their boats, and are said to have burned and destroyed above four hundred of the Dutch busses; and the Dutch fishers appear never to have recovered completely from this disaster.

* Smith's England's Improvement Revised, 4to. 257.

During the late, and even the present war, a few Dutch vessels, under neutral flags, have occasionally appeared on the coast of Zetland, and prosecuted their ancient occupations; but the decrees of Bonaparte, and the measures of retaliation adopted by the British Government, have put an end even to this clandestine intercourse.

It appears to have been always the wish of the Government of Scotland to patronise the herring fishery, and the same feeling seems to have operated on the minds of the British legislature, after the union of the kingdoms; but they never acquired that previous local knowledge, without which, the most benevolent plans are frequently rendered ineffectual. In the year 1750, a bill was passed for the encouragement of the British white herring and cod fisheries. By it a "bounty was to be granted to all new vessels from twenty to fourscore tons burthen, which should be built for that purpose, and actually employed in the fishery."*

* Act 23. Geo. II. History of England, Smollet's Continuation, vol. iii.

Bressa Sound was appointed the rendezvous at which the herring busses were to assemble at the beginning of the fishing season. The act, however, was clogged with certain privileges to a society, under the denomination of the Free British Fishery, and some restrictions on the fitting out of the vessels, so that the bounty was found to be insufficient to defray the expence to vessels from England; and it was scarcely an object even to those from Scotland.

In 1757, the Free British Fishery Society, which had been established but seven years before, presented a petition to Parliament, stating, "that they had employed the sum of one hundred thirty thousand, three hundred, five pounds, eight shillings sixpence, together with the entire produce of the fish, and all the monies arising from the several bounties allowed on the tonnage of their shipping, and on the exportation of their fish, in carrying on the said fishery; and that, from their being obliged, in the infancy of the undertaking, to incur a much larger expense than was at that time foreseen, they now found themselves so far reduced in their capital, as to be utterly incapable of fur-

ther prosecuting the fisheries with any hope of success, unless indulged with the further assistance of Parliament. They prayed, therefore, that towards enabling them to carry on the said fisheries, they might have liberty to make use of such nets as they should find best adapted to the said fisheries; each buss, nevertheless, carrying to sea the same quantity and depth of netting which, by the fishery acts, they were then bound to carry: that the bounty of thirty shillings per ton allowed by the said acts on the vessels employed in the fishery might be increased," &c. The petition having been maturely considered by a committee of the House of Commons, it was determined that the petitioners should be at liberty to use such nets as they found by experience to be best adapted to the herring fishery; and the bounty of thirty shillings was augmented to fifty shillings per ton.*

This act continued in force till 1771, when the tonnage bounty was diminished to thirty shillings, and the number of busses engaged in the

* History of England, Smollet's Continuation, vol. iv.

herring fishery again reduced. While this high premium subsisted, " £. 22,296 was paid in England during the year 1771, for bounties on the tonnage of herring busses; and during the year 1767, no less than £. 31,396 in Scotland. As soon, however, as this bounty was diminished, the number of busses, and the herring fishery, were again abridged. For in the year 1781 only £. 9674 were paid for bounties in Scotland; and during the years 1779 and 1782, no bounties on herring busses appear to have been claimed in England."*

About forty years ago an English company prosecuted the herring fishing on the coast of Zetland on an extensive scale; but, although by no means unsuccessful, yet the expence attending the mode in which it was conducted,

* *Vide* Extracts from *an Essay on the Natural, Commercial, and Economical History of the Herring*, by the Rev. Dr Walker. Transactions of the Highland Society, vol. ii.

Dr Walker had written an elaborate essay on this subject, of which a part only appeared in the Transactions of the Highland Society.

prevented it from becoming a beneficial concern. In the years 1786-7-8, several shallops from Yarmouth resumed this business, but with no more success than their predecessors. The want of a sufficient bounty from Government, and of economy in the mode of conducting the fishery, induced them also to abandon it, and the Dutch remained in undisturbed possession of this source of annual wealth.

The following is an outline of the manner in which the Dutch conducted the herring fishery. About the 16th of June, annually, the busses began to appear on the coast of Zetland; and they generally all assembled in Bressa Sound on the 24th of the same month. They were prohibited by law from wetting their nets before the 24th of June; and the fishing ceased on the 31st of December following. Their vessels were from seventy to eighty tons burden, rigged with a large lug-sail, and having a small mizzen-mast besides, with crews of fourteen hands, of which a proportion were boys. They carried no boat. The fleet was attended by two convoyers, which served both

to protect and to supply the busses with men, in case of death or sickness. There were also smaller vessels called yaggers, which were permitted to bring herrings from the busses until the 15th of July only; and all were prohibited, under very severe penalties, from carrying a single herring to any place but Holland and West Friesland, and, before sailing, the yaggers were obliged to obtain a licence to proceed. Early in the season, when the herrings were deemed a great delicacy, the yaggers which first arrived sold their herrings at a guilder a-piece. After disposing of their cargoes, the yaggers returned to the fishing as common busses.

Each vessel carried generally two fleets of nets. A net is about sixty yards long, and fifteen deep, and twenty nets make a fleet. The nets were set at night, and hauled at sunrise next morning. Particular care was paid to the salting and curing of the herrings, and all that could not be gutted and cured of any particular haul, before sun-set, were either thrown overboard, or kept by themselves, and sold as

an inferior kind of herring.* Each master of a vessel became bound, before leaving Holland, to state where he intended to fish, to what part he meant to return, what mark he used on his barrels; and he engaged not to break bulk without giving previous intimation to the competent inspectors. All the busses which came on the coast of Zetland did not fish herring. Several also fished cod; and the same vessel engaged in both in succession. They generally fished cod from March to May, and then returned to Holland to be ready for the herring fishery; and many of the vessels from Flanders never engaged in the herring fishing at all, but confined themselves to cod, tusk, and ling.

The present ministry, however, with a liberality truly patriotic, have determined that we shall no longer

* It has been said that the Dutch, in the curing of herrings, never remove the gut, on which depends the fine shape and peculiar flavour of their herrings. I cannot speak experimentally on the subject; but of such importance is the roe and melt considered, both as delicacies, and in maintaining the size and shape of the herring, that most of those engaged in this fishery with boats, choose rather to forfeit the bounty of two shillings on the barrel of salted herrings, than remove them.

——————— look on
Shamefully passive, while Batavian fleets
Defraud us of the glittering finny swarms,
That heave our friths, and crowd upon our shores.

A bill was passed on the 25th June 1808, entitled, "An act for the further encouragement and better regulation of the *British* white herring fishery, until the first day of *June* one thousand eight hundred and thirteen, and from thence to the end of the then next session of Parliament." The act is of considerable length, and refers chiefly to the amount of the bounty on tonnage, and on the herrings caught and cured; the requisites to obtain these bounties, and the circumstances which lead to their forfeiture; and the general mode of conducting the fishery. The following is a sketch of its leading points.

I. Every vessel from sixty to one hundred tons, British built, or a lawfully condemned prize, owned in Britain, and regularly engaged in the British white herring fishery, will be entitled to a bounty of £. 3 per ton; but whatever may be the size of the vessel, the bounty is not computed beyond one hundred tons.

But a further bounty of £. 1 per ton is allowed to the first thirty busses or vessels of the above description, for one year, making a premium of £. 4 for the first year.

II. With a view to encourage the deep sea herring fishery in larger boats than are at present employed, the Commissioners for the herring fishery have a privilege of allowing bounties to the amount of £. 3000 annually, "to persons who shall employ boats of a burden not less than fifteen tons, by admeasurement, in the taking herrings on the coast of Scotland, and who shall cure and pack the same, according to such plan, and to such rules and regulations as the said Commissioners shall make and publish in that behalf."

III. The larger class of vessels entitled to tonnage bounty, are appointed to rendezvous in Bressa Sound, on or before the 22d of June annually, on which day they are to be inspected; but no nets are to be set before the 26th of the same month, and the fishing ceases on the 15th September following.

IV. No vessel can engage in the British white herring fishery, which has not been carefully inspected at the rendezvous, and which is not appointed in the following manner.—A vessel of sixty tons shall have a crew of ten men; if above sixty, but under seventy tons, a crew of eleven men, and so on, in the proportion of one man for every additional ten tons, up to one hundred; and two men of the crew may "be foreign seamen, experienced in the deep sea herring fishery." Every buss or vessel shall have on board, in new barrels, sixteen bushels of salt for every last of herring which the vessel is capable of containing; and three hundred square yards of netting for every ton of her admeasurement, every mesh of which being one inch from knot to knot, under a penalty of £. 40 and the forfeiture of the net. The master shall state to what port in Great Britain he intends to return for his discharge, which must be at a port where an officer of the fishery is stationed. No deviation will be permitted from any of these regulations, except in the case of contrary winds, loss of stores, distress at sea, the death,

sickness, or actual desertion of the crew; all which must be verified on oath.

V. Every vessel engaged in the deep sea herring fishery, must shoot and haul the nets from the vessel, "without the intervention or use of a small boat for that service, the vessel not being at anchor while the crew are shooting the nets," and which must be attached to the vessel while they are set; and the herrings caught must receive their first cure on board such vessels, in barrels, and not in bulk.

VI. To facilitate the operations of the fishery, no coast sufferance, or cocket, or landing sufferance from the customs, shall be necessary, previously to any vessel carrying stores, nets, salt, &c. to the fishery, nor for bringing them from thence, provided an officer attached to the herring fishery be at the port from whence they are taken, and to which they are brought.

VII. A bounty of two shillings per barrel will be granted on white herrings which have been gutted and received their first cure in barrels, or half barrels, two half barrels being

equal to one barrel, on the day on which they were caught; which circumstance must be marked on the barrel, each of which shall contain two hundred and twenty-four pounds weight of fish, exclusive of salt and brine. If the herrings are carried coast-wise, in order to be shipped for exportation, they must, in that case, be repacked with great salt, the barrel containing "two hundred pounds weight of wet fish;" and the inspecting officer must certify, that the herrings have not been "repacked till after the expiration of fifteen days, at least, from the day when the same were first cured and packed." In case of any dispute arising between the claimant for the bounty and the inspector, the matter shall be referred to competent judges, and the depositions taken on oath. But if any person shall be convicted of having made a false oath, or having fraudulently marked any of the casks, he shall incur a fine of £. 50 or six months imprisonment.

VIII. The crews of the vessels engaged in the deep sea herring fishery, shall receive a bounty, over and above their wages, of two shillings for every full packed barrel of her-

rings contained in the cargo taken by them, and which shall be paid in the following proportions: Two eighth parts to the master, one eighth part to the mate, and the remaining five eighth parts to the rest of the crew, to be divided equally among them.

IX. Of the trustees for manufactories and fisheries in Scotland, his Majesty may appoint seven to be Commissioners for the herring fishery. These Commissioners regulate every arrangement respecting the fishery; determine on the validity of claims for the different bounties, and pay them when due; appoint subordinate agents to the different fishing stations, with such salaries as they think proper. The Admiralty has the privilege of appointing a commissioned officer of the navy, as superintendant of the fishery, with such a force under his command as shall enable him to preserve order among the persons employed in it, and protect them from their enemies. His duty is to oversee the executive part of the whole fishery: he can, at any time, inspect storehouses or vessels, examine the certificates and journals of the masters, and the manner in which

the herrings are cured. In case of meeting with any opposition in the execution of his duty, it shall be lawful for him to employ force to carry it into effect; and he shall report the same to the Commissioners; and any person convicted of such offence, shall forfeit one hundred pounds. To maintain order and settle disputes, the jurisdiction of sheriffs and stewart-deputes, and their substitutes, is extended over all persons engaged in catching, curing, and dealing in fish, "within their respective counties and stewartries, and also within ten miles of the coasts of their said counties and stewartries, and that in as full and ample a manner as the same is exercised over the inhabitants of these counties and stewartries."

Such are the prominent points in the act for the encouragement of the deep sea herring fishery; in the framing of which, the method adopted by the Dutch has evidently served as the model. A bounty of three pounds Sterling on tonnage is very liberal, and an additional sum to those who first engage in this fishery, is extremely judicious, as it is generally at the commencement that such establishments are

most expensive. It appears, that even a bounty of fifty shillings per ton, had the effect of inducing many to engage in the herring fishery, and that it was then deemed a beneficial concern. A considerable increase, no doubt, has taken place since 1771, in the price of wood, cordage, mens' wages, and provisions; but the additional bounty of ten shillings per ton, and the advanced price of herrings, will so far compensate this, as to render this fishery an object of general pursuit. Indeed the bounty on tonnage alone will go far to defray the expence of fitting out the larger vessels. If the individuals engaged in it be successful also in fishing, it cannot fail to become a highly advantageous trade; yet some modifications on the manner of conducting it are indispensably necessary, in order to derive from it the benefit to the country which it is calculated to yield.

The first subject of consideration is the size of the vessel; and I confess I can discover no good reason, why the lowest class of vessels entitled to tonnage bounty should be sixty tons. The precedent set by the Dutch ought not to apply. They were, no doubt, very suc-

cessful in the herring fishery, but the distance from home, the want of warehouses in Zetland, and the consequent necessity of carrying stores with them for the voyage, obliged them to employ busses of a larger size than was necessary, and which, instead of being an advantage, was in reality a drawback on the profits of the fishing. A small vessel is much more easily managed than a large one, and is much better fitted for the hauling and setting of nets, more especially as boats are not permitted to be used. On some occasions, the herrings move slowly through the water, scarcely proceeding two or three miles in the course of a day; at other times, they travel with considerable rapidity. In the event of a perfect calm occurring, whole divisions of them might pass by a vessel of seventy tons, while one provided with a boat, or of a much smaller size, might be easily rowed to the spot where they were. The great object of the bounty no doubt is, to encourage fishing in the deep sea, and to prevent fraudulent evasions of the act in the first cure of the herrings. But there appears to be no reason why the latter circumstance might not be guarded against in a small vessel, as well as

in a large one, provided that the former were of a size competent to carry salt and casks sufficient to ensure the first cure of the herrings on board.

The restriction of the tonnage bounty to a comparatively large class of vessel, will operate in preventing the landholders of Zetland, and, consequently, the great bulk of fishermen in that country, from engaging in it. Commercial people residing in Zetland, and who, perhaps, possess vessels of different descriptions, cannot employ them more profitably during the summer months, than by entering them for the herring fishery; but this cannot apply to those who have no employment for vessels except during that short period. The ling fishing, as we have seen, terminates generally in the first week of August, after which there still remains more than a month of the best period of the herring fishery; but the same individuals cannot expect to engage in both, because, unless they appear at the rendezvous for inspection on the 22d of June, they cannot enter on the herring fishery that season; and, unless their vessels be above sixty tons, they are entitled

to no bounty on tonnage. It is not likely that the landholders will abandon the ling for the herring fishery, without being convinced of the superiority of the latter; nor perhaps would it be advantageous for their country that they did so; and, under the present circumstances, they cannot prosecute the herring fishery but in the circumscribed manner in which they have been accustomed to practise it. Owners of vessels in Great Britain and Ireland, who propose to engage in the British herring fishery, would probably prefer vessels of the largest class, not only on account of the greater bounty on tonnage, but to save the expence of establishing storehouses in Zetland; but few of the natives of that country could follow their example, and it is hard that they should not participate in the wealth that is removed but a few miles from their shores, and which one would think they were advantageously situated to enjoy. Provided that the herrings are caught in the deep sea, and receive their first cure on board, of what consequence can it be to Government, whether the vessel in which they are taken be twenty-five or a hundred tons? but to the fishermen of Zetland

this is a point of the very first importance. Their country is to them what the store-ships were to the Dutch, the source of supplies, and an occasional depot for their herrings; and the class of busses which were indispensably necessary to the one, are the most unfit and unprofitable for the other.

It is probable that three vessels of twenty-five tons each, from their occupying a wide range, and having a greater facility of changing their situation, would catch a much greater number of herrings in a season than any single vessel of eighty tons; and, if furnished with half barrels, could cure the herrings, conformably to the act, as well as the larger vessels. The wish of Government would thus be more completely answered, more hands would be employed, and the benefit of its liberality more generally felt.

Nearly three thousand natives of Zetland are engaged annually in the ling fishing, and, no doubt, the legislature intended that the late act should operate to their advantage; yet, it is a question, whether those employed in the

ling fishing, and, consequently, commencing the herring fishery later in the season, would be entitled to a share even of the sum annually distributed by the Commissioners. At any rate, the proportion would be very inconsiderable, and could scarcely be expected to induce them to engage in it.

As no vessels of the smallest class have been entered for the herring fishery during the last year, the Commissioners have not deemed it necessary to publish any statement of the manner in which they mean to proportion the three thousand pounds of which they have the annual distribution. But the want of these regulations, I have little doubt, has withheld some individuals from engaging in it. Only one vessel belonging to Zetland has as yet been entered for the deep sea herring fishery, and that one has not been very successful. An unacquaintance with the best mode of fishing with nets from vessels, and the unprecedented rise in the price of hemp, have prevented some from embarking in the herring fishery for the first year. The few nets that were in the country were old, and had been long used in

catching herring in the bays, and were consequently unfit for the deep sea fishery; and a complete set for a buss of eighty tons was estimated to cost between £. 600 and £. 700. Yet, surely, the additional bounty of £. 1 per ton for the first year, to the first thirty busses, was a certain advantage, while a reduction in the price of nets is merely a probable contingency. Convinced, therefore, as they must be, of the beneficial tendency of the act, it is to be hoped, that no partial views of economy will prevent those who have it in their power from engaging in this fishery, the next year.

To extend the tonnage bounty to all vessels belonging to Zetland, from twenty-five tons and upwards, which had been regularly inspected at the rendezvous on the 22d of June, and to permit them to engage in it with a reduced quantity of nets, and number of men, would powerfully stimulate many individuals to embark in this fishery. The sum, though small, would be certain; and as the fishery is carried on near to their houses, the expence attending it would be trifling. Almost all the *free* tenants would have the option of engaging in it, and

they could carry it on, in a great measure, on their own capital. Some indulgence, too, might also be granted to those engaged in the ling fishing, which I think might easily be effected, by granting them an intermediate day of inspection. Thus, all vessels of twenty-five tons and upwards, which had been *bona fide* engaged during the preceding months of the summer in the ling fishery, should rendezvous and be inspected at Bressa Sound on the 8th of August, the period when the ling fishing terminates; but instead of receiving a bounty of £. 3 per ton, they should receive a lesser sum, in consideration of the later period at which they commenced this fishery. Could a clause of this kind be introduced into the act for the further encouragement of the British white herring fishery, it would ensure the safe and successful prosecution, both of the ling and herring fisheries, eminently conduce in ameliorating the condition of the majority of the inhabitants, and render Zetland a still more valuable nursery of hardy seamen.

Section III.

Of some other Branches of Fishing which have been practised, or might be carried on by the Inhabitants of Zetland.

One of the most ancient and beneficial fisheries in Zetland is that of the coal-fish, from the age of a few months to that of eight years and upwards. The fry begin to appear along the shores about the middle of May, and they are caught by the fly about the middle of August. When first seen they are about an inch and a half long, and they appear in greater or less numbers in almost every bay; they are then known by the name of *sillocks*. They retain this appellation until the beginning of May next year, when they receive that of *piltock;* and even at this age they seldom exceed six inches in length. The piltocks frequent the deep water and tide-way, and many leave the coast along with the herrings. In a few parts of Zetland, piltocks are caught in the winter time when two or three years old, but

this is not general, even at the places which they frequent. Indeed, they seldom appear in any considerable number after the second year of their age until they have become the true *sethe*, when, to judge from their size and consistence, compared with their former magnitude, they cannot be under eight or ten years old. They are then observed to have maintained their former habits, of keeping near the surface of deep water; and they are caught in the tide-way in the same manner as mackerel.

It is in the state of sillock and sethe that this fish is most beneficial to the country. The number of sillocks caught in some seasons in the Zetland islands must have been enormous. Upwards of two thousand barrels of oil have been derived from their livers in the short space of seven months. They have decreased greatly, however, for several years; and the quantity of oil obtained from this source for the last five years, would not, on an average, exceed three hundred barrels each year. They are still considered a principal means of subsistence to the poorer classes of inhabitants. They are a safe and nutritious food; and are

caught with bait, or by the fly, without any other expence than the mere labour of fishing them.

The sethe also were more numerous formerly than they are at present, and were caught at the northern and southern extremities of the country. They disappeared from Unst for a long period, but for several years past they have been caught there in considerable numbers. Dunrossness and Fair-Isle, however, are at present the places where this branch of fishery is most uniformly and successfully practised. About fifty tons of dry sethe are annually exported from Zetland. The chief market for them is Leith. It is still the practice, in curing them, to keep on the head, which by many is esteemed a delicacy, and was considered of itself sufficient to defray the expence of freight. When wet, they are bought from the fishermen at a penny a-piece, and if salted by them, at fourpence a-piece. At Leith they bring about ten shillings and sixpence the hundred weight. The liver of the sethe yields besides a considerable quantity of very fine oil.

With the exception of those caught during the summer season, along with the ling and tusk, cod have never been fished separately by the Zetlanders, but as an article of food. The Dutch, and other foreigners, prosecuted this branch of fishing with considerable success; and the number of cod has greatly increased since they have been compelled to abandon it. The cod are more generally abundant on the west, than on the east side of the country, particularly between Foula and Mainland. Those boats from Walls, with crews of three men, which ply in-shore in the summer time, with long lines, in search of ling and tusk, might be more profitably occupied in fishing cod with hand-lines. The number of cod caught there, on some occasions, is very great, and the expence attending the fishing of them merely trifling.

There are a great many excellent lobsters on the coast of Zetland, but they are rarely sought after by the inhabitants, even as articles of food. Last year, three smacks from England came to the country to search for them, and they caught several thousands. They supplied

the Zetland fishermen with trap-baskets, and gave them twopence a-piece for every live lobster brought to the vessels, and some individuals were able to earn nine shillings a-week in this manner. But the people belonging to the smacks complained much of the laziness of the Zetlanders whom they employed, and who, they said, might have caught twice the number which they did. The deaths among the lobsters were very considerable, but, after all, this first attempt was so far successful as nearly to defray the expence incurred by the adventure.

It has long been a favourite opinion with some, that the Greenland whale fishery might be successfully carried on from Zetland. There are a few advantages which the situation of the country affords, but I question whether they have not been over-rated, and are not more than counterbalanced by the inconveniences which would attend it.

There would be a saving of expence on the voyage out and in, of about a month, and this is almost the only advantage which would

result from it. As the sailors could not be more effectually protected against impress than those in any other vessel in the same trade, they could not be hired at a less rate of wages; and, for some time at least, the principal officers must necessarily be from another country.

There must necessarily be a considerable capital at once sunk, in erecting storehouses and apparatus for boiling the oil. The only species of provisions which Zetland affords is beef, but beef killed in November or December preceding, would not keep until August; and, under the present circumstances, it is impossible to get it in March, the time of commencing the voyage. Every other article of provisions must be imported, clogged with the additional expence of freight and insurance. On the return of the ship from Greenland, as there are no dry harbours or wharfs to which she could be taken to unload, the blubber must be landed by boats, which is a method both tedious and expensive. After the oil had been boiled and put into casks, the operation of shipping must take place, freight incurred, and new policies of insurance repeated in carrying it to market.

As the oil fluctuates in the price every season, it is scarcely possible to insure purchasers before-hand, and it would therefore often have to be consigned to the management of an agent, who must receive a considerable percentage for his trouble.

In selling the oil at Leith, to people in different parts of Scotland, it is generally sent to the purchaser in the blubber casks, which he comes under an obligation to return by a certain time, and the inland communication in that country, by means of canals, enables him to fulfil his engagement at a small expence either to himself or to the owners. But this could not be done in Zetland, either with regularity or at a small expence; and to guard against the possibility of interruption, it would be necessary to be provided with an additional number of casks, which would constitute a very heavy deduction on the profits of the trade.

When these facts are attentively weighed, I think it will appear that the probable savings on the length of the voyage to Green-

land from the Zetland islands, are more than counterbalanced by obvious and unavoidable deductions, to which the whale fishery carried on from that country would be necessarily subjected.

CHAPTER VII.

OF THE CONNECTION WHICH SUBSISTS BETWEEN THE ZETLAND LANDHOLDERS AND THEIR TENANTS, AND OF SOME IMPROVEMENTS OF WHICH THIS SYSTEM APPEARS TO BE SUSCEPTIBLE.

HAVING detailed separately, in the two last chapters, the circumstances which affect either the landholders or their tenants, we are prepared to enter on the consideration of the connection which subsists between them; to examine the objections which have been made to it, and to state the improvements of which it appears susceptible.

I have said, that there are three modes of renting land usually practised; and these I shall consider in the order in which I mentioned them. The first and most general is that

where the lands are low-rented, and the landholder has an indemnification, by a profit on the sale of a part of the produce of the tenant's industry.

The landholder, who is the sole proprietor of the ground, naturally possesses the indisputable right of letting his land to the highest advantage. This is similar to what takes place in every species of commercial transaction, and experience soon points out the mode most likely to attain this end. Fish is the staple commodity of Zetland, and it has been long an article of considerable trade to different parts of Europe. But to collect and export cargoes of goods, requires capital, which cannot fall to the share of every individual in any state of society, and a few therefore dispose of the labours of the multitude. This is the case with the Zetland landholders. They collect and buy up from the tenants, fish, butter, and oil, which they dispose of by wholesale in foreign markets. The tenants, in their turn, rent the land at a low rate, and have a variety of means of improving their condition, over which the landholders have no controul.

Let us suppose that a tenant rents five merks of nine-penny land, which is a fair average number:

The rent, as already stated, is,	£.1	13	4
Deduct the profits of his summer fishing, - -	1	12	0
	£.0	1	4

The profits, therefore, on his summer fishing, or the labour of two months and a half, do more than pay the annual rent of his farm, the whole produce of which is still at the disposal of the tenant. The sum which he earns at this time is certainly small, but the rent is low, money is scarce, and his wants are few, and he has still the disposal of the labour of nine months and a half in each year. In many parts of Zetland, the tenants prosecute the ling fishing in winter and spring, in the way most agreeable to themselves, the landholders having no right to interfere, during that season, with the mode of conducting it.

Having examined in detail the individual articles on which the landholders have a pro-

fit, we shall now endeavour to ascertain its amount.

The general profit to the landholder, on the ling fishery, amounts to 5s. per hundred weight of dry fish. A boat, with a crew of six men, therefore, which catch during the summer 106 cwt. of wet fish, or something more than 42 cwt. of dry fish, will yield a share of seven hundred weight to each man; and on the share of each man, the landholder derives a profit of £. 1. 15s.

It is only the oil made from fish caught during the summer, over which the landholder has any controul. He allows the tenants generally fourteenpence per gallon for it, and the price at the Leith market is very various. Indeed, unless the quantity be very great, the advantages to the landholder are scarcely worth reckoning; for when the price of oil is high in Zetland, the tenants sell it to merchants, and when it is low, they give it to the landholder; and in those parts of the country where it forms a part of the payment of the land-rent, if commuted, the tenant is never charged more

than one shilling per can. But we shall suppose that the landholder has a profit of threepence per gallon on the oil made during the summer, and in many parts of Zetland this is the only source from which his tenants derive it during the whole year. The quantity of oil to each boat is generally about a barrel, or six cans to each man; and therefore the profit to the landholder on this article, will be 1s. 6d. for each sharer in the boat to the haaf.

The butter is a severe exaction on the tenant, and by no means a profitable article to the landholder, for the quantity which he can claim is necessarily restricted to a determined proportion. The butter is always expected to be paid in kind, and the price fluctuates with that in the Leith market. I have taken the average price to be ten shillings per lispund; and when converted, in case of failure in the tenant to make up the quantity, I have never known the landholders charge more than twelve shillings; some, indeed, do not exceed eight shillings per lispund. It is in general of very inferior quality. Some is used by bakers, but a great proportion is employed as grease. The

lispund, as already mentioned, consisted originally of twelve Scotch or Dutch pounds, but it has been gradually increased to thirty. As this rise, however, has not been accompanied by a proportional increase of price to the tenant, the innovation has been highly unfavourable to the latter. The lispund has remained stationary at thirty pounds for many years. The butter, by sale, may be said to yield the landholder an extra profit of two shillings per lispund.

Let us now see the aggregate amount of the land-rent derived from the profits on these different articles, taking five merks as the average number in a farm.

Nett amount of cash, as per the rent table,	£. 0	8	4
Profit on 7 cwt. of dry fish,	1	15	0
Sale of 2 lispunds and a half of butter at 12s. per lispund,	1	10	0
5 Fowls at 4d. the smaller islands paying none,	0	1	8
3 days work at 6d.	0	1	6
Profit on 6 cans of oil, at 3d.	0	1	6
	£. 3	18	0

Now £. 3. 18s. divided by five, the number of merks in a farm, makes the rent of each merk to be nearly 15s. 7d. which is within a few pence of what I have stated to be the ordinary rent of nine-penny land, when let at its highest price. The fish, oil, and butter, are the only articles of exchange between the landholder and the tenant, on which the former can possibly derive any profit. As the current annual price of each article is publicly known, and as they are generally sold to merchants in the country, there need be neither doubt nor mystery on the subject; and the profits to the landholder on them, can be ascertained with the most perfect accuracy. I have examined the prices of these articles in the different parishes with great care, and the average will be found to be rather unfavourable to the landholder.

The proprietors of land derive no profit whatever, on the sale of fishing materials to the tenants. Many of them have lost money by this trade, but none ever gained by the importation of these necessaries to the Zetland fishermen, who, with the exception of a small increase for freight and insurance, are uniformly supplied

with them at prime cost. Even commercial people residing in Lerwick, who engage in the ling fishing, conform to this practice, and supply the fishermen they employ also at prime cost.

The profits to the Zetland landholders on the rent of their lands derived from the sources already stated, have not only been over-rated by those who have written on the subject, but have never, I believe, been well understood by the landholders themselves. It appears evident, that after a great deal of care, expence, and risk, a landholder can do little more than collect the ordinary rent of his land, and, could he be assured of punctual payment on the part of the tenant, it would be greatly to his advantage to renounce the connection, and restrict himself to a simple money payment. To a person little versant in the nicer calculations of commerce, which is the case of most of the landholders of Zetland, to receive several hundred pounds at once, for a cargo of fish, appears an object of great importance, and he fancies that the business that yields it must be a lucrative concern; but he forgets the many previous

sums which he must pay before the fishery can commence; the waste of some articles, and the loss of interest on the money employed in their purchase; the daily expence attending its prosecution; and the bad debts which are consequent on unsuccessful seasons.

But while I state the profits which the landholder derives from this agreement, I must not omit to mention the acknowledged drawbacks and losses to which he is exposed. He supplies the tenant on credit with every reasonable demand, and however long the account may remain unsettled, he never claims interest on the debt. The tenant, however, receives any balance that may be due him once a-year; his profits, although limited, are certain, while the landholder has the risk of a fluctuating market. The latter is subjected to the unceasing expence of building and repairing houses; and in times of scarcity he advances the tenant beyond what the returns of several favourable years can repay; and there are but few instances where a selfish inhumanity has interfered with this parental attention to the wants of their suffering dependants. In

the event of the death of any of the fishermen, which frequently happens by drowning, in the fishing season, the support of their widows and children falls upon him. There no doubt have been individuals among them, who have treated these unfortunate objects with harshness and severity, but they are greatly outnumbered by those who have poured the oil of compassion on their sufferings; and there are many well known acts of disinterested benevolence which have been practised by the Zetland landholders, to widows and orphans, which do honour to humanity.

Such is a state of things which has subsisted in Zetland for a series of generations, and which no doubt had its origin, in a great measure, in local necessity. It may be considered as a bargain entered on for the mutual accommodation of both parties, but which, abstractedly considered, is more advantageous to the landholder than to the tenant; for the profits to the landholder increase with the quantity of produce, while the tenant has a profit on the low rent of the land only. There is nothing illiberal in the landholder giving a comparatively mode-

rate price to the tenant for his fish, oil, &c. until the low rent of the land be paid; but the latter surely has a claim to an increase in the price of what he sells to him above the payment of the rent.

In the case where the tenant has the disposal of his labour and time, and pays the rent of his farm on a certain day, either in articles of country produce, or in cash; as the arrangement is understood to have been entered into voluntarily, by both parties, no observations seem to be necessary on the subject. Leases on these terms, however, are confined to particular districts, and are in some degree prescribed by the situation and produce of the farm, and seldom display superior liberality on the part of the landholder who grants them.

The third variety of renting land, is that where the lands are not only rented at a high rate, but the landholder demands that the tenant shall sell to him his fish at a lower rate than what he could receive from another person. This species of management is certainly the least favourable to the tenant of any. It

cannot fail to repress his disposition to industry, for, correctly speaking, he can call no part of its produce his own; and he has no means of bettering his circumstances, but by fraudulently evading the terms of his agreement. It must be admitted, however, that bargains of this kind occur chiefly in the parishes of Weesdale, Sansting, and Aithsting, where estates have been purchased at a high price. The penny rates were abolished in consequence of this increase of price; and although the purchaser found it necessary to keep the fishing in his own hands, yet the single profits on it were not sufficient to render him common interest for his money. There are instances also of this species of management in the parish of Tingwall, which neither equity nor sound policy can justify.

While, however, it is easy to appreciate the relative merits of these different systems, and to point out their obvious defects, it will not be found so easy to suggest changes which shall operate with equity and advantage to all parties. The improvements which have been

proposed may be considered under the following heads: The separation of fishing from farming;—the complete independence of the tenants;—and the granting of leases for a considerable number of years.

From what I have stated it appears, that the profits derived from the ling fishery, as it is at present conducted, are scarcely those of ordinary trade, and seem to be totally inadequate to support an independent establishment. Until some such change as I have proposed on that branch of fishery shall have been ascertained by trial, not only to be more beneficial than the present one, but also so productive, that the profits derived from it are, with the assistance of common fishing, competent to maintain a man and his family during the succeeding months of the year, we can neither expect nor wish to see this change generally adopted. The opportunities of employment to individuals, either in particular kinds of handicraft, or as common labourers, in the winter season, are both limited and uncertain, and, except in a very few instances, never supply the means of daily labour.

This independence of fishing on farming, is in some measure practised in the case of the sons of fishing tenants, who either prosecute the fishing on their own account, or fish to the landholders for stipulated wages. They receive as liberal encouragement as the trade can allow, but the moment they marry, find themselves under the necessity, in order to procure the means of subsistence to their families, to unite the two together, and follow the practice of their fathers.

As it does not appear, that by fishing, alone, the poorer classes of inhabitants could obtain the means of independent subsistence, so neither will it be found that agriculture, singly, can supply the deficiency. We have seen the insuperable obstacles which the climate often presents, the precarious nature of a Zetland crop, and that the advantages to be derived from the other departments of husbandry, are both circumscribed and accidental. It is rather from a more efficient union of the different modes of occupation which the country affords, than by their separation, that the condition of the peasantry is likely to be improved. It is

from a variety of sources that they extract a livelihood, and the attempts hitherto made, on a large scale, towards instituting a division of labour in that country, except in Lerwick, have terminated in the ruin of the adventurers who engaged in them.

Nothing seems at first view more reasonable, than that a man who holds a farm should, if he pay the rent of it, have the exclusive disposal of his labour, and be allowed to sell its produce to the highest bidder. Yet there are situations in Zetland, where this state of things, even if it did exist, would not be uniformly conducive to his interest.

In the event of any radical change taking place on the ancient system of the penny rates, the first effect would naturally be, a considerable rise on the rent of the land; for it can never be expected that the landholder shall forego, for the accommodation of the tenant, those advantages which he at present enjoys. Instead, therefore, of the small sum which he now pays, his rent would be

raised, so as to equal what the proprietor formerly received. This is nothing but fair; and the tenant might still benefit by the change, if he possessed capital to enable him to fish successfully on his own account, and facilities of disposing advantageously of the productions of his labour. But, in many parts of Zetland, the attainment of the first would be attended with considerable risk, and the other is sometimes impracticable.

It has been mentioned, that a great proportion of the ling fishing is carried on in boats, with a crew of six men, and from particular stations, many miles distant from the place of their ordinary residence. As the single produce of the farm cannot discharge this increase of rent in every situation, the tenant has no other means left to do so but by fishing, or going to Greenland for wages. This latter mode of employment, besides being limited, is generally occupied by unmarried men, and is moreover attended, not only with the risk of being impressed on the voyage, but subjects the individuals to continual persecution from the impress officer on shore. A great number

of tenants, therefore, would be compelled to engage in the ling fishery at home. To carry it on with the prospect of advantage, he must, in the first instance, persuade five other men to join with him in making up a boat's crew; and, in the next place, he must obtain credit somewhere, to enable him to buy and furnish a boat with every thing necessary for the fishing. Now, besides the difficulty of inducing others to engage in the same views with himself, he is at best at the mercy of some mercantile adventurer, who, having no interest in his fate beyond what a temporary bargain can excite, will insist on the scrupulous payment, at a stated period, of the advances he has made to him. In the case of the loss of lines, or of any misfortune happening to the boat or to the crew, the tenant is again involved in his former difficulties, and encumbered with additional debt; and although possessed of a nominal independence, is in reality more dependent than before.

But fish is not the only article of sale from which he is to obtain the means of paying his rent. There are a variety of others, which, to

yield an adequate return, must necessarily be brought to a competition market. Zetland is composed of a cluster of islands, separated from each other by ferries of considerable extent, and which are often impassable for weeks together. Beyond five miles to the westward of Lerwick, there is nothing in the whole country that has the appearance of a made road; and the irregular surface of the deep moss renders travelling, in the winter time, impracticable to all but foot passengers. The land carriage of heavy articles is thus rendered difficult, if not impossible, and the transport of them by water is dangerous and expensive; for often, after a boat's crew has brought to Lerwick the collected produce of a whole season, with the view to sell it there, the coming on and continuance of bad weather, for weeks in succession, has compelled them to consume, in the purchase of provisions for their immediate use, sums which would have gone far in diminishing their annual rent.

This statement will be found to be correctly true with respect to the greater part of Zetland, and the actual exceptions to it occur in the

parishes of Tingwall and Whiteness, which, from their vicinity to Lerwick, and the opportunity of a good road, the tenants can readily bring their produce to a competition market. But, even here, the principal part of them go to Greenland during the summer, to enable them to pay the high rent for their farms, instead of prosecuting the ling fishing, for which these districts are but inconveniently situated.

A similar exception might be made in the case of the islands of Burra, nor would the obstacles formerly mentioned operate there with so much severity. These islands, which are of considerable extent, possess the rare advantage of contiguity to the fishing ground, by which means their inhabitants can prosecute the fishing and attend at the same time to the management of their farms. There, the tenants could easily coalesce in parties, and pursue the fishing in small boats with a very slender capital, and the quantity caught annually is sufficiently great to make it an object to the buyer, to send a vessel to carry them off from their own booths. But even under the present system

the inhabitants of these islands are almost all reputed to be rich.

Coningsburg too, which is about nine miles south from Lerwick on the east side of Zetland, is favourably situated for the independence of its inhabitants. It is a compact fertile parish, and the views of the different individuals in it being necessarily the same, they might readily associate for their mutual advantage. They have been in the habit, until lately, of prosecuting the fishing exclusively on their own account, and with advantage.

The island of Bressa, which is separated from Lerwick by a narrow ferry only, possesses every facility of a competition market, and is thus exonerated from a principal difficulty attending the independence of its inhabitants. It is, however, remote from the fishing ground, which must therefore be necessarily carried on in the largest class of boats; but its vicinity to Lerwick would enable the tenants to obtain credit on more favourable terms than those in most other parts of the country.

The only late attempt, upon a large scale, to exonerate the tenants from any claims on them beyond the payment of their rent, was made in 1799 by Mr Hunter of Lunna. This gentleman felt a wish to contribute, by every means in his power, to their amelioration, and with this view he offered them regular leases, at very moderate rates. Most of the land of his estate is of the nine-penny class, which, when rented at the full value, I have stated to be about fifteen shillings per merk, but Mr Hunter demanded only ten shillings. Of about one hundred and thirty tenants which he had on his estate, such was their disinclination to change, that only eight of the whole number were disposed to enter into his views, and avail themselves of his liberality. Convinced that the plan which he proposed was more favourable to the tenants than any which had been formerly tried, he was determined to reduce it to practice. He therefore summoned all his tenants either to remove or to conform to his plan. Aware, however, of the difficulties likely to result from their want of capital, and apprehensive that advantage might be taken of their necessities, he established a fac-

tor in the parish, whom he supplied with every species of materials that they were likely to need, with no other object than to increase the sphere of mercantile competition; and it was completely optional with the tenants, either to buy from this factor, or to sell to him their produce.

Mr Hunter's benevolence really carried him too far. He had intentionally omitted introducing cautioners in the leases, from an apprehension that such a clause might have been instrumental in oppressing them, by leading to a monopoly of the produce of their industry. The latter took advantage of the omission; they neglected to pay their rents, the seasons were rather unfavourable, and their landholder not being disposed to prosecute them, found it necessary to revert to the former system, and quietly put up with the loss of a considerable part of his rent. Yet, notwithstanding this ungracious return for his liberality and indulgence, the same anxious solicitude for the welfare of his tenants actuated his mind, on setting his estate to a tacksman, as when he retained the management of it in

his own hands. The following extracts from the terms of lease prove this assertion, and deserve to be generally known.

"And the said Thomas Leisk and J. Mouat hereby bind and oblige themselves and their foresaids, not to raise the land rent against such of their sub-tenants as perform the customary occupation of fishing, conformably to the country practice, above what is stipulated in the said rental, and not to charge such tenants above eight shillings Sterling per lispund for their butter rent."

"And further, the said Thomas Leisk and J. Mouat bind and oblige themselves and their foresaids, jointly and severally, not to prosecute any tenant or tenants on the said lands and others for any sum exceeding the current year's rent of his or their possession, the last year of this lease, nor to raise any action at law against the said tenants, or any of them, for the two years immediately subsequent to the expiry thereof, either by themselves or their assignees."

This lease or tack was granted in 1803, for fourteen years; and each tenant on this estate, therefore, really obtained a fourteen years lease of his farm, on terms the most favourable that the situation can possibly afford. Mr Hunter informed me, that his reason for introducing this last article was, on account of a suspicion that had been entertained that tacksmen often allow the tenants to run into debt by advancing them unnecessary articles of merchandise, and then ruin them on the expiry of the lease, or oblige the proprietor to prolong the lease that the tacksman may not sequestrate their whole stock.

A lease of land for a certain number of years seems to be a necessary concomitant of independent fishing, as without the assurance of a permanent establishment, no tenant would readily engage in agricultural improvements, nor could he obtain the credit necessary to enable him to prosecute the fishing. Yet, unless the practice were universal over the country, and all the proprietors of land were concerned in establishing it, considerable difficulties would come in the way of any partial change

of this kind. Thus, in the case of a landholder who has a small estate in a detached part of the country, certain farms on that estate are much more productive in the soil, and more conveniently placed for fishing than others. The tenants occupying such farms would no doubt be glad to obtain a long lease of them, even by paying a high rent; but other tenants less favourably situated, would rather wish to remain in their former state, and retain the liberty of change. There would therefore, necessarily, be a considerable deficit in the number of fishing boats usually fitted out, and consequently a deficiency in the quantity of fish caught annually; and on scarcely any one estate in the whole country, would the profits on the rents of the more productive farms make up for the loss induced by the diminished quantity of fish, by those who rented the less productive ones. Now, it would be unreasonable to expect that a landholder, either to accommodate particular tenants, or to gratify the wish of a speculative philanthropist, shall forego those positive advantages which he has been accustomed to derive from his pro-

perty. Such expectations may be entertained, but I believe there are few individuals in any part of the world who would be disposed to carry them into practice.

The tenants, on the other hand, generally speaking, are decidedly averse to take leases, even when offered them on very favourable terms. This I know to be a fact; and there are several circumstances which may operate in producing this feeling on their minds. The very practice of renting farms but for one year, subjects the tenants to instances of severity from the landholder or tacksman, and they conclude that to be bound by an agreement would ensure the repetition of it. Some of them occupy the farms on which they were born, and on which their fathers have lived, and feeling no apprehension of being summoned by the landholder to remove, wish to themselves to reserve the privilege of leaving it. Many are fond of novelty and change; and an ignorance of the beneficial effects resulting from them, leads the tenants to decline engagements of a permanent nature.

But although a partial change might be disadvantageous to several landholders, and notwithstanding the disinclination to take leases evinced by the tenantry, I am persuaded that were the practice of granting leases universal in Zetland, it would conduce eminently to the benefit both of the landholders and the tenants; and the want of a lease is the true cause of the hardships, whether real or pretended, of which the latter complain.

We have seen that the commercial arrangements between the landholders and the tenants are fair and equitable, designed to be advantageous to both parties, and such as the nature of their relative situations seems actually to prescribe. Whence then proceeds the charge of oppression so often bestowed on the Zetland heritors, and the assertion, that misery and dependence are the inseparable attributes of the Zetland peasantry? It appears to me, that if these allegations are to be considered as general principles, they are false, and founded in erroneous conceptions of the subject; but that the occasional practice of severity on the part of the proprietor, and of meanness and dupli-

city on that of the tenant, is the natural result of a system where all the power is on one side, and all the dependence on the other, and where neither of the parties is under the influence of a responsible agreement.

The ignorance of the tenant renders him insensible to the advantages which he derives from the low rate at which he rents his farm; he sees some of his neighbours sell the produce of their industry at a higher price than what he receives for his own, and he has an exaggerated conception of the profits which the landholder reaps from it. He therefore clamours about his poverty, carefully conceals the amount of what he has earned, accumulates debt, and endeavours to increase the number of his temporary comforts, by fraudulent evasions of the terms of his bargain. Frequently, too, after the tenant has come under the most solemn promise to fish to the proprietor of his farm, and after other men have been hired to co-operate with him, and all the expence of fitting out a boat already incurred, he shall listen to the suggestions of some other person, violate his engagement to his landlord, and

enter on some new speculation. It is now perhaps too late in the season to supply his place; there are no documents on which a prosecution can be founded, and the landholder is compelled to submit to the loss.

Such conduct cannot fail to irritate the landholder, and to raise in his mind something more than a mere wish to prevent its recurrence. He therefore summons the tenant to remove, and seizes on his stock for the payment of his debt. The tenant, perhaps, has a wife and family, and has been unsuccessful in his recent adventure, and the whole are now thrown, by his misconduct, on the charity of the public. The ear of compassion is always alive to the tale of distress, and, without examining into the merits of the case, the votary of squeamish sensibility at once pronounces the landholders the most unrelenting oppressors, and the tenants the most abject of slaves. The landholder is thus constantly in dread of losing his tenant, and the tenant is incessantly occupied in contriving schemes of personal aggrandisement, to the disadvantage of the landholder. Such conduct is subversive of every

moral principle, and tends to generate in the mind a spirit of meanness and disaffection to superiority of rank.

While this scene of irritation, on the one hand, and of mental depravity on the other, is going on, the temporal interests of both suffer. The dread of being deprived of the fruits of his industry, checks the efforts of the enterprizing agriculturist, and the idle and improvident renter of a farm, thinks of nothing but the present moment. Hence the ground is unimproved, and the number of bad debts is increased.

A very serious inconvenience, and one which nothing but a lease can obviate the bad effects of, is the practice of letting large estates, for short periods, to tacksmen. A tenant at *will*, as it is termed, must either come into the views of his new master, or he must leave his farm. To remove, is often disagreeable and painful, and it is manifestly prejudicial to his interest to carry his live stock with him, as he cannot attempt to accustom them to an annual change of pasture, without incurring a positive loss;

and to agree to an increase of rent, is, in other words, to accumulate debt on his head.

As the want of leases is thus productive of a series of evils, both to the tenants and the landholders, so, many obvious advantages would result from the adoption of an opposite system. If a tenant were disposed to be industrious, he could make many beneficial improvements on his farm during the currency of his lease, of which he might be assured, that neither the caprice of his master, nor the envy of his neighbours, could deprive him. The responsibility, too, of an agreement which he knew to be binding, would not only stimulate him to exertion, but excite in his mind a regard for veracity, and a respect for the obligation he had come under.

In those parts of the country where fishing and farming are necessarily united, a tenant could offer no rational objection to agree to fish to his landholder, on receiving a fair price for his fish; the amount of which would necessarily rise and fall with the demand for the article, and the expence attending the fishery.

The latter would not then labour under the constant apprehension of having his fishing schemes baulked by the violation of agreement, nor see his tenants carried off by the regulating officer. He would witness the progress of industry in the improvement of his ground; his rents would be more regularly paid; and he would take away from envy and ignorance, the pretexts for detraction.

If the landholders shall be convinced that this reasoning is correct, it becomes them to adopt the plan which it recommends. They must not wait for the co-operation of the tenants, whose ignorance and selfishness will resist any change on the immemorial custom of their country, and who are disposed to live and die in the practice of their fathers. Were even a few of the leading heritors to agree among themselves, to let no land but on regular leases, for a certain number of years, the advantage of the change would soon be felt, and the practice become universal. Although some short-sighted economists might characterize this mode of proceeding as an infringement on the free will

of the tenants, every reflecting mind would view it as an union for the public good.

In every case where there takes place a rise on the rent of the land, there should be a proportional increase on the price of the fish, or other articles, which the tenant sells to the proprietor of his farm. This alone constitutes reciprocity of advantage, and stimulates to exertion. Mr Scott of Melbie has set a laudable example of this kind. Most of the merks of land on his estate were of the nine-penny class, the usual rent of which, we have seen, is six shillings and eightpence Sterling, and he allowed the tenants three shillings and fourpence for each hundred weight of wet fish. Mr Scott proposed to the tenants to raise the rent of the land to ten shillings per merk, and to pay them five shillings per hundred weight of fish. He stated to them, that at a very moderate rate of fishing, they would be able, by this augmentation of price for their fish, to pay the mere land-rent, and on every hundred weight which they caught beyond it, the change would be decidedly advantageous to

them. But scarcely any one would agree to the proposal. Mr Scott, however, was convinced that ignorance alone prevented the tenants from immediately closing with a plan so obviously beneficial to them, and he resolved to carry it into effect.

To demonstrate the superiority of his scheme, Mr Scott instituted this change at a time when the fishing had been unusually good, so that a great proportion of the profits derived from it, came directly into the pockets of the fishermen, who were thus effectually convinced of the beneficial nature of the change. The profits to Mr Scott, though not so great as before, are more certain; the tenant is strongly stimulated to industry, and he has no inducement to sell his fish to any one but to his landlord, who, on equal terms, ought to have an undisputed preference. Were a lease to be added to this mode of management, the tenants would possess nearly all the advantages of which their situation is susceptible, and possess as extensive means of happiness as any similar class of people in any part of the world.

The fluctuating price of the butter, and the great difficulty of obtaining it, in some seasons, are circumstances which bear peculiarly hard on the tenants; but it must be acknowledged, that the landholders seldom harass them on this score. Several of them demand no butter at all, and others, as in the case of Mr Hunter, have fixed the price of the lispund at so low a rate, that the tenant can have no possible cause of complaint. But it would be better to abolish butter as an article of payment in the land rent altogether. Let a proportional increase be made in money, and let the tenant, instead of preparing an inferior kind of butter, exert his ingenuity in improving the quality of it, and sell it to the best advantage.

The exaction of a fowl for every merk of land, has been considered by many to be a hardship on the tenants, and I believe most of them view it as such themselves. The practice, however, is confined to Mainland, and although there are several extensive proprietors in the larger islands, they have never made a demand of this kind, nor have their tables on

that account been less abundantly supplied. There appears to be nothing improper in a landholder demanding of his tenants, a certain moderate number of fowls, as a part of the payment of his rent, for the consumption of his own family, especially, as at some seasons of the year, poultry is the only species of fresh meat that can be obtained. It would be presuming too far to prescribe the kind and degree of comfort which a gentleman shall derive from his property, if his demands be fair and equitable. But no proprietor of a large estate, can possibly consume in his own family, all the fowls which his tenants are bound to pay to him, and he generally sells or transfers the surplus to some of his friends. The tenants are obliged to carry the fowls, at particular periods, to the individuals to whom they have been transferred, and who often reside many miles from their farms. This practice is not only attended with labour, loss of time, and expence to the tenants, but is, besides, a species of traffic altogether unworthy of the attention of an independent possessor of landed property.

The three days labour in each year to the landholder, is certainly a serious hardship on the tenant, especially as he has to work three days also to the clergyman. It is true, he is paid for his labour to the former, as the service is considered as forming a part of the rent of his farm, and he is besides often maintained during the performance of it. Were the choice of the periods left to himself, the inconvenience attending it would be comparatively less; but this is not the case, for a demand is sometimes unexpectedly made, and he is under the necessity of resigning a more advantageous employment, or postponing some useful occupations respecting his own farm. The difficulty of procuring regular day-labourers, no doubt, first gave rise to this practice; but many of these difficulties have ceased with the increase of population. Let this service be converted into money, and a liberal offer of payment for the performance of labour will never fail to command individuals to engage in it. Both the heritor and the clergyman now live in a more enlightened state of society, and it becomes their duty to concur in abolishing a practice which keeps

alive the recollection of feudal oppression, and stifles the feelings of generous freedom.*

But, besides the claims of the landholders, we have seen that there are other circumstances which concur to harass the Zetland tenants, the abolition, or even diminution of which would eminently contribute to ameliorate their condition. I have detailed the different species of crown rents, or superiorities, as they are frequently denominated, and I feel no hesitation in pronouncing them a principal source of oppression to the tenants. Owing to the extent of the country, and the variety of articles in which these payments are made,

* If, however, it shall not be deemed proper to abandon the claim to these services altogether, they may be directed to a channel which shall be advantageous to the tenant, and conducive to the public good. As there are no made roads in the country, and as the want of safe and commodious inland communication is a great drawback on the pursuits of industry, let the annual labour, usually performed to the heritor and the clergyman, be employed in the making of roads. Under a judicious management of this kind, I am convinced that good roads might be made in a few years through a great part of Zetland.

it is utterly impossible for any single individual to collect them, and they are therefore necessarily set to tacksmen. Lord Dundas's present factor, who yields to none of his predecessors in moderation and equity, must exert himself, whatever his private feelings may be, to the utmost for the benefit of his employer, and he consequently sets these crown rents to the highest bidder. It is a feeling which operates on the minds of the tenants, without exception, that however deficient they may be in the amount of their rent to the heritor, the payment to the superior, and the teinds of the minister, are indispensably binding; and this principle has been too successfully acted upon and confirmed by tacksmen. That oppressive and arbitrary measures should result from this state of things is obvious. The tacksman of superiorities alone, has no interest whatever in the fate of the tenant. His tack duty must be paid at a stated period, and he himself must live by the profits of it. The amount from each individual is apparently inconsiderable, and as there is no fixed price for the article in which the payments are made, in case of a deficiency, he not infrequently avails himself of

that circumstance to demand and extort a profit, which, had he possessed the article itself, he could never have realised. Thus, while the proprietors of land have never demanded more than twelve shillings per lispund for the butter, the tacksman of feu-duties and scatt has gone as high as a guinea.

The annual amount of these payments does not much exceed five hundred pounds. However ample the fortune of lord Dundas is, it can never be expected that he can singly afford to confer such a boon on the Zetland peasantry as to withdraw his claims to these payments; but it would be worthy of the liberality of the British legislature, to indemnify his lordship, and cancel this feudal exaction. If this desirable event cannot be brought about, it would still be an alleviation of the burden to reduce the whole to a single money payment. A co-operation among the heritors might surely accomplish this, and as the present mode of management is injurious to them, and not advantageous to lord Dundas, it is surprising that they have not already taken steps to effect a change in it. The tenants would then know

the real extent of the claims on them, without the daily vexation of preparing themselves to answer imaginary profits.

The payment and collection of the minister's teinds operate with peculiar severity on the tenants. This is certainly not the intention of the worthy pastors; but an indirect influence in harassing the poor, is inseparable from the present mode in which their stipends are obtained. We have seen that their livings are derived almost exclusively from the productive industry of the tenants. An active fisherman and a careful shepherd pay well for their religious instruction, but a rich heritor, whose lands are tenanted, and who can at once buy whatever he stands in need of, is completely exempted from any share in the burden. As it is impossible, consistent with the due discharge of his clerical functions, that a clergyman can, in every case, be the collector of his teinds, they are set, with only one exception in Zetland, to tacksmen, and at the expiry of a lease, or the commencement of a new incumbency, are again let to the highest bidder. Much of that harshness and severity, therefore, which I have

stated as concomitants of the tacks of the crown rents, operate in the case of teinds; and the truth of it is often more clearly demonstrated in the case of the teinds, by the acknowledged considerable reversion to the tacksmen after having paid the minister his stipend. It is true, indeed, in the case where the stipend, as that of Tingwall, has been modified, the minister receives a fixed annual salary from the heritors, and the lands are then attachable for the sum. But the stipend must be obtained, and it is derived eventually, from the labouring farmer, who is removed, by this arrangement, but a step farther from his minister. As the teinds of Tingwall, however, are all paid in butter and money only, the simplicity of the payment is an advantage to the tenant; but either the clergyman or the heritor have still the power of varying the price of the butter annually. It would be better, notwithstanding, for the tenants, if this practice were general over the country.

As there is very little rental land in the parish of Lerwick, the stipend to the minister there has been hitherto derived, chiefly, from a

per-centage on heritable property and trade, denominated *stent;* but it is intended to lay the burden in future on heritable property only.

The butter part of the payment of teinds and crown rents, appears thus to be an unceasing source of vexation to the Zetland tenantry. While this article was made of inferior quality, and the price consequently low, the conversion into money, when the butter could not be obtained, was effected with ease, and at a moderate rate; but since it has risen in price, and been improved in quality, the skill and industry of the tenant have operated against him, and he is compelled, in his own defence, to manufacture the grease which he formerly paid as butter. This cannot fail to repress industry, and excite a disinclination in the people to improvement. Good butter will always sell well, but this they cannot afford to make merely to give away; and if any man should be more conscientious in this respect than his neighbour, and improve the quality of his butter, it is brought forward as an example to others, and a precedent against himself.

Upon the whole, it appears that there is ample field for improvement on the political economy of Zetland. Many of the customs prevalent in it, have had the sanction of ages, and seem to have had their origin in local necessity; some have been introduced through caprice and been enforced by the hand of oppression; and others are maintained from a mistaken notion of hereditary prerogative. But a radically good change on this system ought not to be considered the exclusive work of any particular class of individuals; it requires the co-operation of many; and is to be effected by the dissemination of intelligence among the people; a hearty concurrence among those of superior rank, in measures for the public good; and a conviction in all, that independence of mind, and freedom of action, are as necessary to the display of active industry, as to the attainment of moral excellence.

NOTES.

CHAPTER I.

Geographic Situation of Zetland.

Page 1.—of the text, I have stated, generally, that the Zetland Islands lie between the fifty-ninth and sixty-second degrees of north latitude. The following observations on this subject occur in Pinkerton's Modern Geography.

"We have better charts of the coasts of New Holland, than of the isles of Orkney and Shetland. Captain Donnelly's chart of the Shetland isles, seems the most accurate, in which the Main Land corresponds in length with Lewis, while Ainslie's would give a length of almost ninety miles. Yell and Unst seem also more properly disposed in Captain Donnelly's map. The Danish Captain Von Lowenorn (Zach's Geographical Journal, May 1799) found, that the Shetland isles were about one third shorter than represented in the English map, (Preston's) which also

puts the northern extremity half a degree farther north than it was found by minute observations. Lowenorn published a map of those isles in 1787." *Pinkerton's Modern Geography, Abridgment*, p. 92.

Murdoch Mackenzie published excellent charts of the whole coast of Orkney in 1750, but Zetland has never yet been completely surveyed. Preston's chart, as applied to the west side of Zetland, is very accurate, but he did not survey much of the east side. With respect to the size and relative position of the larger islands, Preston is tolerably correct. By his scale Mainland is about seventy miles long; it has always been reckoned sixty. I have placed the most northerly point of Zetland in 61° 7° north, not from having ascertained that to be the real degree of latitude, by actual observation, but as it corresponds with the general result of other observations.

CHAPTER II.

Occupation of Zetland by the Picts.

Page 16.—I have alluded to the probability that the Piets, in their voyage from the north, came to Scotland by the islands of Orkney and Zetland. I am happy to find that Holinshed supports the same opinion; a circumstance I was not aware of at the time

when the sheet, in which the observation occurs, was written.

"Truth it is that they (the Piets) first came out of Germanie, into the isles of Orkeney, and there inhabiting for a season, feried ouer into Cathnesse, whereof it came to passe, that the streict there at this present is called Pietland-firth. These Picts, as by conference of times may appeere, entered first into Scotland about the year after the creation of the world 3633, and beeing once arrived, they began to erect and build certaine forts, wherein they might defend themselves, if any force of enimies should chance to put them to such shifts." *Holinshed's Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Iceland*, vol. v. p. 37, 38.

Escape of Bothwell.

Page 89.—I have related in the text the current tradition respecting the escape of Bothwell. The following is a little different.

"They came in sight of his ship, which moved the Laird of Grange to cause the skipper to hoist all the sails, which they were loath to do because they knew the shallow water thereabout. But Grange, fearing to miss him, compelled the mariners, so that for too

great haste the ship wherein Grange was, (the Unicorn) did break upon a bed of sand without the loss of a man, and Bothwell had leisure in the interval to save himself in a little boat, leaving his ship behind him." (Melville). The same author states, "that no man was so frank to accompany Grange as Adam Bothwell, bishop of Orkney." *M. S. Addition to Dr Campbell's Political Survey*, in the possession of the Antiquarian Society of Edinburgh.

A few years ago, a gentleman, whose name has been hitherto withheld, but who is a native of Orkney, transmitted to the Antiquarian Society of Edinburgh a collection of interesting and authentic documents relating to Orkney and Zetland. He appears to be intimately acquainted with the state of both these countries, particularly the former; and to keep up the connection, where the information is scanty, he often supplies the deficiency with his own valuable observations. From his laborious researches I have derived much pleasure and information, and I regret only that I had not an earlier opportunity of consulting them.

Suspension of Lord Robert Stewart.

Pages 91, 92.—The following observations tend to explain the cause of earl Robert Stewart's suspension

from the receipt of the revenues of the earldom of Orkney and Zetland, although they differ a little in point of time from that mentioned in the text.

"In November 1575, Robert, earl of Orkney, was clapt up in the eastle of Edinburgh for having sent letters, by one Patrick Elphingstone, to the king of Denmark, offering, for a certain sum of money, to put him in possession of the isles of Orkney. This was judged high treason, and most people expected to have seen this imprudent earl brought to the scaffold; but for seven thousand pounds, whieh he readily paid down to Morton, (the regent), the business was hushed, though he was not restored to his freedom till some time after." (Crawford's Memoirs) *M. S. Addition to Campbell's Political Survey,*—Antiquarian Soeiety of Edinburgh.

Shipwreck of the Duke of Medina Sidonia on Fair-Isle.

The following eurious document details the events which befel the Duke of Medina Sidonia in Zetland, after his shipwreek on Fair-Isle, mentioned in the text, page 92.—

"One memorable aeeident here oeeurs, namely, that the Duke of Medina, Admiral of the Formidable

Spanish Armada, (in the reign of Queen *Elizabeth*, *Anno* 1588), here suffered Shipwrack in a creek on the East side of this Isle, where the Ship split, but the Duke with 200 men came to shore alive, and wintered here in great miserie; for the *Spaniards* at first eating up all they could find, not only Neat, Sheep, Fishes, and Fowls, but also Horses, the Islanders in the night carried off their Beasts and Victuals to places in the Isle, where the *Spaniards* might not find them: the Offieers also strictly commanded the Souldiers to take nothing but what they payed for, which they did very largely, so that the people were not great losers by them, having got a great many *Spanish ryalls* for the Vietuals they gave them; but now the people fearing a famine among themselves, kept up their Victuals from the *Spaniards;* thus all supply from the Isle failing them, they took their own Bread (which they had preserved), which being dipt in Fish oyl, they did eat, which being also spent, it came to pass, that many of them died for Hunger, and the rest were so weakned, that one or two of the Islelanders finding a few of them together, could easily throw them over the Banks, by which means many of them died. At length all sustenance failing, not only to the *Spaniards*, but also to the Islelanders, they sent a small Boat or Yole to *Zetland*, desireing a ship to carrie them out, lest all the Inhabitants of the Isle should be famished. Notice came to *Andrew Umphrey* of *Burry* (then Proprietarie of the Isle), who having a Ship of his own,

instantly went to the Isle and brought them to *Zetland*, where, for the space of 20 days or a Moneth, they met with better entertainment. The Duke stayed at *Quendale* till the ship was readie, where, (imagining the People did admire him), he made his Interpreter ask *Malcolm Sinclair* of *Quendale*, if ever he had seen such a man? To which *Malcolm*, in broad *Scots* (unintelligible to the Interpreter) replyed, Farcie in that face, I have seen many prettier men hanging in the *Burrow-moor*.

"From *Zetland Andrew Umphrey* earried them in his little Ship to *Dunkirk*, for which the Duke rewarded him with three thousand merks." *Sir Robert Sibbald's Description of the Isles of Zetland.*

Earl of Orkney, created after Patrick Stewart.

Page 96.—I have stated in the text, that earl Patrick Stewart was executed in 1614. Some say that this event took plaee in 1612. After his death no person enjoyed the title of earl of Orkney until 1696, when king William created George, fifth son of William duke of Hamilton, earl of Orkney.

This nobleman served seeond in eommand to the duke of Ormond in Flanders in 1712, and died with

the rank of field-marshal, to which he had been appointed by George II. in 1737.

George was sueeeeded by his eldest daughter, Anne, eountess of Orkney and lady Kirkwall. She married William O'Brien, earl of Inchiquin in Ireland.

In 1756, the title deseended at the death of Anne to her eldest daughter, Mary, wife of Murdoch O'Brien, earl of Inchiquin.

Mary sueeeeded in 1790. She had been married in 1777 to the Hon. F. Fitzmauriee, brother to the present marquis of Lansdowne, who died in 1793. She had a son, Thomas Hamilton, at present lord Kirkwall.

Udallers.

Page 98.—I have stated, that after the death of earl Patrick Stewart, the people, both of Orkney and Zetland, petitioned the king to take them under his immediate protection. The following extract proves that the number of udallers was at that time considerable, and that the diversity of municipal regula-

tions between the Danish and Scotish inhabitants, was productive of much general inconvenience.

"Item, It is claimed by the udallers of Orkney and Zetland, who have for these many ages, conform to Danish law, possessed their lands for payment of skat and teind, that no man be interponed between his Majesty and them to molest them; but that they remain his Majesty's immediate vassals for payment of skat and other duties, conform to their rentals, ay and while his Majesty conform their rights to the laws of this kingdom." *Petition of the Udallers of Orkney and Zetland, presented to Parliament in* 1633; *extracted from the petition of sir Laurence Dundas, bart. to the Court of Session, Oct.* 12. 1776.

Few Heritors of Zetland held Charters of the Crown in 1664.

Page 102.—It appears, that at the time when William, earl of Morton, obtained his grant of the islands of Orkney and Zetland, in conjunction with viscount Grandison, there were very few heritors in Zetland who held charters of the Crown.

"All the heritors and feuars of Orkney and Zetland did take holdings from Spynie, excepting such

of them as had formerly got charters of confirmation from the Crown, of which there was only in Zetland Sinclair of Brough. By granting of these charters there was raised a very considerable sum of money, as appears by a particular account thereof for Zetland, amounting to the sum of 15,000 pounds Scots, which was very heavy upon many of them." *Gifford's Historical Description of Zetland.*

Attempt by Sir Laurence Dundas to revive the claim to be immediate Superior.

In 1770, sir Laurence Dundas, pretending to stand in the place of the Douglasses, Sinclairs, and even the ancient earls of Orkney, wished to revive the claim of his being the immediate superior. "With this view he brought an action of declarator before the Court of Session against the Officers of State, and the several landholders in Orkney and Zetland, the scope and purport of which was, to compel the proprietors of every description, to resort to him, as their immediate superior, instead of taking charters from the king's chancery, as vassals of the Crown. This pretension was successfully resisted on the part of the defendants, in whose favour the Judges determined the suit. Some points of lesser moment were remitted to the Barons of the Exchequer; but the plaintiff's title to the feu-

duties, in use to be paid to his predecessor, not being disputed, was confirmed; leaving the principal heritors at liberty to recur, as formerly, directly to the Crown, while the small udallers had an option, if they chose, either to subject themselves to the sovereign, or to acknowledge sir Laurence Dundas." Sir John Mitchell of Westshore, bart. and John Bruce Stewart of Symbester, Esq. appeared on the part of the proprietors of Zetland. *M. S. Addition to Campbell's Political Survey*, Antiquarian Society.

Chamberlains and Taxmen of the rents of the Stewartry of Orkney and Zetland.

Page 103.—It is stated in the text, that in 1669 the grant to earl Morton, through viscount Grandison, was revoked, and the islands erected into a stewartry. The following are the taxmen or chamberlains who collected the rents.

"In 1670 Mr George Scott of Giblistoun was made stewart of Orkney and Zetland, and taxman of the crown-rents thereof, payable to the King's Exchequer. He continued five years, and was succeeded by captain Andrew Dick, who continued five years, and was succeeded 1681 by Charles Murray of Hadon, and sir Robert Milu of Barntoun. They continued

five years; and 1686, William Cragie of Garsay was appointed, and held the office five years; 1691, colonel Robert Elphingston of Lapness; 1693, sir Alexander Brand of Brandsfield; 1697, the hon. Mr Robert Douglas, afterwards earl of Morton; 1698, sir William Menzie, and sir Samuel Maclellan." *Gifford's Historical Description of Zetland.*

Irredeemable Charter in favour of the Earl of Morton.

Page 106.—I have stated, that in 1742 the earl of Morton received an irredeemable grant of the islands of Orkney and Zetland. The following is a copy of this act, the preamble of which alone is omitted.

"And whereas, under the condition of the said above mentioned grant, which is made subject to your Majesty, or your royal successors, it cannot be expected that the said lands of Orkney and Zetland will be improved, or that sums of money will be laid out by the grantees for the further improvement of the same, whereby there arises an evident disadvantage to the public, there being considerable tracts of marishes and fens within the said lands which might be drained and made useful, and there being also several other improvements which might be made upon the same; and, particularly, there being

several ports, creeks, and havens, adjacent to which houses might be built and erected for the convenience of fishing, whereby the trade of fishing might be greatly promoted and advanced: WHEREFORE, and for the public utility, and as a mark of your Majesty's royal grace and favour to James, earl of Morton, and his family, your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subject, the said James, earl of Morton, doth most humbly beseech your most excellent Majesty, that it may be enacted, and be it enacted by the King's most excellent Majesty, and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, That the said earldom of Orkney, lordship of Zetland, together with the whole islands, holms, burghs, *udal lands*, and other lands, of whatever designation, lying within the sheriffdom and stewartry of Orkney, belonging to the said earldom and lordship, and which during the time of the aforesaid annexation, did belong to the crown, together also with the whole castles, towers, fortalices, mills, multures, fishings, annual-rents, reversions, patronages of churches, chaplainaries, altarages or prebendaries, teinds, parsonage and vicarage, with the offices of justiciary, stewardship, bailiary or foudary, with the whole casualties and privileges thereto belonging; and with all other parts, pendicles, pertinents, casualties, jurisdictions and privileges, and others whatsoever, belonging to the said earldom and lordship, shall be,

and are hereby of new DISSOLVED and DISANNEXED from the Crown, and patrimony thereof, for ever; and that the same be hereby vested in the person of James, earl of Morton, his heirs and assignees whatsoever, heritably and irredeemably, for ever, free of any right of redemption, reversion, or regress whatsoever to his Majesty, or his royal sueeessors: TO BE HOLDEN, and the said earl, and his heirs and sueeessors, to hold the said earldom, lordship, and others above mentioned, with the pertinents, of his royal Majesty and his royal sueeessors; paying therefor yearly to his Majesty and his royal sueeessors, the sum of five hundred pounds sterling, at two terms in the year, Whitsunday and Martinmas, by equal portions, in name of feu-farm, with the double of the said feu-duty at the entry of every heir; and the said earl, his heirs and sueeessors, always administering justice to the lieges in the aforesaid offices of jurisdiction: Together also with the sum of one thousand and six hundred pounds Scots to the ministers of the gospel in Orkney, or such other sums as shall be modified by way of augmentations to the said ministers, out of the teinds above mentioned, at the aceustomed terms of payment; and that for all other burden, exaetion, question, demand, or service which may be in any ways asked or required, in consideration of the earldom, lordship, isles, lands, offiees, jurisdictions, and others above mentioned; *reserving* all hawks belonging to his Majesty, with the

falconers' salaries, and other casualties to them belonging, conform to former custom. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED by the authority foresaid, that the right of the premises hereby vested in the said earl, his heirs and successors, shall be as valid and effectual *as if the same had never been annexed to the Crown, and patrimony thereof*, and as if the several parts of the said earldom, lordship, lands, isles, and others, had been herein more particularly expressed. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this present act of dissolution and disannexation of the premises from the Crown, and patrimony thereof, shall have the full force and strength of any former act of dissolution: And, That the former acts passed in the Parliament of Scotland, in the years one thousand six hundred and twelve, and one thousand six hundred and sixty-nine, *and all other acts annexing* the foresaid earldom of Orkney, lordship of Zetland, isles, lands, offices, jurisdictions, and others above mentioned, to the Crown, be and stand forever *repealed*, in so far as they may in any ways derogate from this present act; with this *proviso* always, that the right of the jurisdiction of admiralty of the premises is hereby specially reserved to his Majesty and his royal successors, and is noways hereby vested heritably in the said earl and his foresaid: SAVING, nevertheless, to the same James earl of Morton, any temporary rights of the jurisdiction of the said admiralty, granted to him by his royal Majesty. AND IT IS hereby further PROVIDED and

DECLARED, That it shall and may be lawful for the Barons of his Majesty's Court of Exchequer in Scotland; and they are hereby AUTHORIZED and REQUIRED to pass signatures of the premises, to and in favour of the said earl and his foresaids, whereupon charters and infeftments may proceed, according to the custom of that part of Great Britain called Scotland, in the terms, and under the conditions and reservations in this present act contained, and in *such ample form as is contained in any former charters granted to the said Earl or his predecessors*; and free moreover from any right of redemption, reversion, or regress, formerly competent to his Majesty and his royal successors: SAVING unto all and every other person or persons, bodies politic and corporate, his and their heirs and successors, executors, administrators, and assigns, (other than and except the King's most excellent Majesty, his heirs and successors), all and such estate, right, title, interest, claim, and demand, as they, every, or any of them, might, could, or ought to have claimed, held or enjoyed, in case this act had never been made."

CHAPTER III.

Udal Tenure and Law-Tings.

Page 128—133.—I have detailed the ancient mode of dividing property and dispensing justice. In Campbell's Political Survey it is stated, that the *odal* law is older than the time of Harold Harfagre. This may have been the case, but the name appears to have had some allusion to St Olla, whose memory was held throughout Norway, and all its dependencies, in the highest veneration.

Some statutes respecting the sheep of Feroe and Zetland, were made at an early period by *Hagen* duke of Norway, son to king Magnus, and may perhaps have led to the introduction of that valuable code of municipal regulations called *Country Acts*. One of these documents commences in the following words:— "Hagen, by the grace of God, duke of Norway, son to king Magnus crowned, sends all men that shall see or hear this patent, the blessing of God, and also our spiritual and dear friend Mr Ellender, bishop of Feroe, and Mr Sifvort, provincial judge of *Hetland*, which we have sent you, to the end the controversie amongst the commonalty, about the points which they wanted in the ordinance for profitable house-

keeping, and therefore, we have let stitch together these four leaves eoneerning the affair, and the sheep business, whieh we have with the eounsel of our principal men prepared, as we know shall be most profitable for the commonalty," &e. &e. This ordinanee is dated Opslo 1040. *A Description of the Islands and Inhabitants of Feroe*, by Lueas Jaeobson Debes, 1670, p. 228.

The *Book of the Law*, which was employed at the law-tings, was long reeognized by the kings of Seotland. It appears to have been the only written laws to which an appeal was made in eases of difficulty, and from this eireumstanee, it was frequently seereted and withheld, when its statutes interfered with the views of oppressive rulers. Both earls Robert and Patrick Stewart were prosecuted for having eoneealed the book of the law, and Torfæus mentions a Norwegian governor, who was complained of for a similar offence.

In the sale or transfer of udal property, there appears to have existed that pious regard to the feelings of relations and kindred whieh we see reeorded in Seripture.

"Will a man sell his *odal lands*. Then shall he summon the *odal born*, (*i. e.* the kindred) and give notice to them that he is to sell such *odal land*, making them the first offer, if they will buy. Moreover, he shall proclaim, or cause to be proclaimed, in the public market, that he is to sell such *odal land*, and he shall again offer it to his own kindred, the *odal born*," &c. *Cox. Rogers. Process concerning the weights and measures, commonly called the Pundlar and Bismar*, 1758.

Weights and Measures.

Page 133.—commences the account of the weights usually employed in Zetland. The increase in the weights, called Pundlar and Bismar, appear to have been arbitrary, progressive, and of an old date.

In 1576 these weights suffered the first increase. The lispund was raised by earl Robert Stewart from 12 to 15 libs., and the other weights in proportion.

The lispund was sometime after raised by earl Patrick, from 15 to 18 libs.

From the year 1620 or 1624, to the year 1700, these weights were brought back from 18 to 16 libs.

notwithstanding some arbitrary attempts to augment them, and the temporary changes and fluctuations that thence ensued; but afterwards, about the year 1700, they returned to 18 again, and continued so till the year 1712.

These weights were gradually augmented and changed by the earls of Morton from 1712 to 1743, when a county trial took place, in the sentences on which, occurs the following resolution, "*Resolved, by universal consent, that the further use of these* Pundars *and* Bysmars should be prohibited, ay and while the just standard weight of this country should be known."

In 1758, occurred the celebrated process by the earl of Galloway and others, udalmen and proprietors of land in Orkney, pursuers, against James earl of Morton, defender, with a view of restoring the weights called *pundlar* and *bismar* to their original real standard. From this process I have extracted the preceding observations on the fluctuating state of these weights, and the corrupt practices to which it gave rise. Similar innovations, I have stated, took place in Zetland. The pursuers lost the cause, but they displayed great ingenuity of argument, and a profound and intimate acquaintance with all the ancient Norwegian laws and customs relating to

Orkney and Zetland. The following are the observations of the unknown Orcadian on this subject.

"The ostensible object of this process was the ascertainment of the real standard, by a recurrence to their original—to fixed rules and to equitable regulations."

"In this action they maintained, and endeavoured to prove, the corruption, mobility, and gradual augmentation of the pundar and bismar. These changes, whether well or ill founded, operating to the infinite disadvantage of the islanders, whose substance was thereby vastly impaired, are ascribed to the nefarious practices of the earls, chamberlains, and farmers, a system of iniquity first begun by Robert and Patrick Stewart, and afterwards continued, as opportunities presented, under their successors, not excepting the Douglasses, and even the defendant himself, by means of his substitute and factor, Andrew Ross Esq. who, as it is pretended, enlarged the lispund in Shetland," &c.—*M. S. in the Library of the Antiquarian Society*, vol. for 1800.

Although a common instrument in Zetland, I described the bismar in what I took to be the words of Dr Barry. I find, however, that he has borrowed that description verbatim and without acknowledgment, from the above process.

CHAPTER V.

Fiorin Grass of Ireland.

Page 202.—To the list of grasses that may be cultivated in Zetland, the fiorin grass of Ireland may be added. It is the *Red-Robin* of Young in the *Annals of Agriculture,* and is supposed to be the celebrated *Orcheston grass* of England. It is the *agrostis stolonifera* of Linnæus.

"Dr Richardson affirms that it thrives in all soils, high or low, wet or dry; on bare peat moss; on the flow bog, or on the pavè of a shut-up turnpike road."

"The fiorin is best propagated by strewing the stolones, or strings, over the surface of the land, and sprinkling a little earth over them. The seed might be sown, but strings afford a more speedy return; land laid down with them in April yielding a crop of hay or green food the same season." *Scots Magazine, October* 1809.

I have sent some of the strings to Zetland, but an experienced botanist informed me, that he had no doubt that the same grass already existed in the country.

CHAPTER VI.

Ling Fishery.

When treating of the ling fishery, I entered into a detail of the risk and expence attending the mode in which it is at present carried on, and the slender profit which such a mode of management was calculated to yield to those engaged in it. I am well aware that several favourable reports have been made at different times on the subject, both to Parliament and to the country; but an attentive consideration of the facts which I have stated, and a practical acquaintance with the details of the subject, will lead to a very different conclusion from that which asserts, "that little remains to be proposed for improving the fishery carried on upon the coast of Shetland." Indeed one of the very few but real improvements on this fishery which has yet been proposed, was found to be impracticable on account of the small size of the boats engaged in it.

In 1772, Mr Cobb was sent over to Zetland by the Board of Trustees for improving fisheries, to discover to the fishermen a new and improved mode of fishing. This office he performed, and proved by experiment, that three fish were caught by his mode, for one in

the common way. He returned to Zetland a second time in 1773, and was equally successful. The mode practised by Mr Cobb was the following: He attached a cork to each small cord, or *tome* as it is called, to which the hook is fixed, about six inches from the hook; and he introduced a number of lead sinkers along the course of the main line. The object which he had in view by this arrangement was, that while the line was kept stretched, along its whole extent, and resting on the bottom, the bait was buoyed up at a proper distance from it. In the common method of setting the lines, the hooks lie on the bottom, are often covered with sea weed, and become inseparably attached to tangles and rocks, which not only prevents the bait from being seen by fish, but is also a principal cause of the loss of the lines. The increase of weight, however, produced by the leads, was found too great for the small boats, and the improvement, although obvious and acknowledged, was laid aside. Were the practice of employing small sloops in this fishery, instead of open boats, to become general, the method recommended by Mr Cobb might be successfully practised.

In pages 252, 253,—I have given a short account of the mode of fishing practised by the Irish, in their wherries. The following observations on this subject,

cannot fail to be interesting to those who may be disposed to follow their example.

"Their lines contained one thousand hooks on one end; they examined the direction of the stream by a lead and line, with a buoy affixed to it; when the buoy rose up they knew how the tide ran; observe that the current must always be in the bight of the line. The first buoy was thrown and the line paid out, whilst the vessel was steering, either by the wind or otherwise, upon a particular point of the compass, till the last buoy was cast, when they tacked, and steered upon the opposite point, and never failed to find the first buoy."

"By this mode, they frequently took some hundred valuable fish at one set, and in some places much more distant from the coasts than ever had been known or attempted by the Shetland fishers. Their lines were remarkably strong, which indeed is necessary on account of the apparent way the vessel may have in the water. Their bait was pickled herrings, or the smaller kind of lamprey eels, &c. but the vessel's way is easily stopped by the dexterity of the fishers in managing their wherries, or cutters, that will lie to, as if they were at anchor." *Considerations on the fisheries in the Scotch Islands,* part ii. pp. 82, 83, by James Fea.

CHAPTER VII.

Scatt Process.

In page 333 of the text, I have suggested the propriety of the heritors of Zetland uniting in an attempt to buy off the Seatt from lord Dundas, or at least to endeavour to get it converted into a payment in cash. In 1750, a considerable number of the heritors of Orkney and Zetland entered a process in the Court of Session against the earl of Morton, for the abolition of the Seatt, alleging, that as it was the ancient land-tax paid to the crown of Denmark, it became in some measure converted into the British land-tax, or cess, and that it was harsh and illegal that they should be called upon to pay both. The Court, however, decided in favour of the earl, and gave it as its opinion, that immemorial practice constituted the best law.

END OF VOLUME FIRST.

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